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17

Lazy
Dungeon
Master





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Lazy Dungeon Master

"FEELS LIKE I FINALLY HAVE CONTROL OF
THE BODY, AT LEAST? JUST **ACCEPT**
YOUR DEFEAT ALREADY...!"

Dungeon Core Number 89

HAKU (?)



"---(PLEASE HELP.)"

Goddess (?)
SUCCUMA

SUDDENLY, A PLEASANT VOICE
REVERBERATED IN MY HEART.

WE WENT OUTSIDE THE
CAFETERIA AND LOOKED UP AS
IF IN A TRANCE, AND SAW A
MASSIVE HALF-TRANSPARENT
BOARD IN THE SKY, SHOWING
THE IMAGE OF A GODDESS... OF A
WOMAN SO BEAUTIFUL SHE
COULD ONLY EVER BE CALLED A
GODDESS.





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Prologue

It happened suddenly on an otherwise-normal spring day. Every dungeon core within Haku's faction launched challenges to Dungeon Battles. Their target? All the same dungeon: Core 10's.

"All units, advance," Haku signaled, and so all the dungeons invaded Core 10's dungeon at once. Several Cores were assigned to branch dungeons instead, but attacking those would still put a burden on Core 10, which stood to benefit Haku. It would also allow her to prevent him from escaping through Dummy Cores, ensuring she could finish him off for good. Under normal circumstances, she would leave it at weakening him, so one of the Heroes she was raising could land the final blow and grow stronger, but as she was dealing with a First Lot Core, she intended to destroy him herself.

Core 10's Main Dungeon, which she was invading with the bulk of her forces, was a traditional underground labyrinth. The entrance was disguised as a cave in a small hill of dirt, and advancing a bit farther inside would lead to the cave giving way to smooth stone walls and a cobblestone floor. The monsters that appeared were of various species, but the majority were undead, to reflect Core 10 being an undead-type Core.

"Good grief, what a troublesome opponent," Haku said, sighing as she looked at her map. To be undead was to be sturdy, in general. And any monsters you sent would be turned against you upon dying. Core 10 was not a First Lot and Top Ranker for nothing—his dungeon was deadly.

Haku, for the purposes of better commanding her entire army, was not in her Master Room; she was camped in front of the entrance to Core 10's dungeon and was giving orders to each of the Cores under her command. Under normal circumstances, a Dungeon Battle would entail connecting dungeons via portals, but due to the number of invaders, Core 10 was simply being swarmed; the area above had already been conquered and was safe.

Haku checked the front lines via her map while sitting on a one-person sofa. There was a platoon of Shine Minotaurs swinging light-elemental axes against a horde of mummies in white dresses. The axes had been effective against the undead on the way, but the surprisingly dexterous mummies did not take much damage from them.

"Undead with a resistance to light damage... How annoying."

“My lady, I am told those mummies are the corpses of former High Priestesses and High Priestess candidates. It truly stimulates the imagination to imagine each of their stories,” extolled a cross-dressing woman with a grin, wearing a white tuxedo with gold embroidery fit for a stage—Core 219. She was the Dungeon Core of the [Garden of Light], located near Tsia. She, for her part, was using zombies as fertilizer to produce and send forth plant-based monsters.

“Meep! I found a side path! Here, I’ll share my map!”

Lastly was Core 629, the rabbit-type Core named Mikan. He was the Dungeon Core of the dungeon near the imperial capital where Keima had served as producer: the [Rabbit Rest Spot]. Haku did not have... high hopes for his combat abilities, but he was contributing greatly through using a horde of squirrels to make map progress.

“To think Core 629 would surpass my expectations to this degree,” Haku mused.

“This, too, is thanks to Lady Rokuko’s Master, no? Keima Goren...”

“...No, I will consider this Core 629’s accomplishment,” Haku replied, despite being forced to acknowledge that the squirrels running underneath the undead’s feet to unlock more map progress greatly resembled Keima’s rat strategy. That was obvious, as Core 629 had learned it from Keima.

Not to mention, this strategy was especially effective against their current opponent. Those who died in Core 10’s dungeon would be turned against them as undead... and indeed, several of the squirrels were being crushed beneath the undead’s feet as they ran. They were weak; far too weak. They exploded like nothing when stepped on. But that in turn meant their corpses were so violently mangled that it was actually more difficult to raise them as undead. And even if they were raised, squirrels wouldn’t provide any combat power whatsoever... Their weakness was counterintuitively proving to be a strong weapon against Core 10’s undead dungeon.

“Do not tell me... Will Core 629 be achieving the highest merits for this battle?”

“Work hard so that does not happen, Core 219. The same goes for everyone else as well,” Haku replied, and the Cores of her faction nodded through their monitors. The majority of them were Cores that existed within imperial territory. Many could not resist her, as their land had been conquered by the empire, and their lives had been left in Haku’s hands.

“Gyahahahaha! As if undead this weak could ever beat me! I’ll be winning those highest merits! I am strength incarnaaaaate! That orange rabbit just doesn’t get iiiit!”

Core 564—a demon-type Core unable to resist Mikan’s orders—swung his giant scythe at the front lines, cutting a High Priestess

mummy in half. As a former member of the Demon King faction, Core 564 apparently found mobilizing himself more to his taste than sending troops. Though it didn't help that he didn't have enough DP to summon troops in the first place.

"Still, this magic scythe is powerful indeed. It's as if it were made for me! I shall name it Ultra Death Scythe."

"Core 564. That is merely one piece of my private collection, which I am lending you; do not name it without my permission," Haku said through the monitor.

Core 564 jerked and hastily straightened his back. "L-Lady Haku! I did not realize you were watching, ahaha... 'Twas merely a joke... Spare me..."

"That said... I am considering rewarding you with that scythe depending on the scale of your success here. If that comes to pass, you may name it as you like."

"T-Truthy?! O-Ooh, I shall fight with all my heart and soul!" Core 564 exclaimed, then ran off swinging at another High Priestess mummy. Cleaning up those somewhat-troublesome High Priestess mummies was well worth a single magic scythe. It was one of the harder ones to use in her collection, and it had been rotting away in one of her storerooms.

"Are you certain, Lady Haku?" asked Chloe, her cross-dressing Succubus butler, once she ended the call with Core 564. That scythe was technically at the higher end of her collection, to the point one could build an estate in the rich district of the imperial capital with the proceeds.

"Quite certain, Chloe. It will be a fitting payment if he does indeed do work worth compensation," Haku replied. If he did handle all of those High Priestess mummies, then she could also give a portion of Keima's payment to the subordinate of one of her subordinates, killing two birds with one stone. That would be the most useful thing that scythe could do.

"Still, I feel unsettled," Chloe said.

"Oh my. Did you have a fear of the undead all along?"

"That is not what I was referring to. Rather, this is progressing far too smoothly... We are dealing with Core 10, are we not?"

"Ah, that."

Core 10 was, once again, a member of the First Lot—the first Cores to be created. On top of that, he was a Top Ranker, which meant he was in the Top Ten on the rankings list. That made him a veteran of veterans who had survived countless months and years of conflict. Why, then, was he using nothing more than the basic strategy of sending waves of monsters? Even considering the size of Haku's assault, Chloe was likely right in that he was surely planning

something.

“According to Keima’s report, he was weakened by the remnants of the God of Light, and this may still be having an impact.”

“Even if he was unwell, surely he could trust the fight to his subordinates?”

“He could, if he had subordinates he could trust as I trust you,” Haku said. The majority of Cores did not trust their dungeons to subordinates. One felt resistance to essentially entrusting their entire bodies to others to use as they pleased. It wasn’t quite on the level of, say, living together, but you needed to at least trust someone enough that you would rest your head on their lap and let them clean your ears. Core 10 had betrayed Father and sided with the God of Light, so in the end, could he trust his own subordinates...? It was not hard to imagine that the answer was no.

“Oh, next up are Giant Zombies. They have Troll Zombies with them... I wonder how much DP these cost?”

“They are rather fast, too. He must have enhanced them significantly, my lady,” Core 219 said. The monsters were no slouch, either. It did not seem like Core 10 was slacking, at the very least.

* * *

It was many against one. Although Core 10 was a First Lot Top Ranker, Haku was similarly a First Lot Core, and one higher than him in the rankings. With her leading a veritable army of Cores in battle, Core 10 had no hope of winning. His forces were pushed back, any side paths were crushed, and his dungeon was conquered. Mana-sight was used to identify and destroy any possible escape routes.

And so, after half a month of constant battling, Haku’s army managed to completely fill Core 10’s dungeon. However, this had been accomplished far faster than expected and with far fewer casualties. Mikan’s squirrel platoons contributed to that significantly.

“...To think that rabbit would contribute so greatly,” Haku said aloud. The squirrels had checked every inch of every floor, found hidden Dummy Cores one after another, and even made enemies waiting in ambush waste the element of surprise for nothing. All these factors had led to an advantage in almost every way throughout the entire battle.

“I did not think I would struggle to pay not only Keima, but all of the Cores in my command as well... Now, now, what to do about this? Payment or no, Father will scold me if I spend too much DP at once,” Haku muttered.

“Perhaps you could permit Ichigo or whomever to give public performances in the imperial opera, the underground coliseum, and so on? You can pay DP according to how many customers arrive,” Chloe

responded.

“A respectable idea. Items should do as well. We can provide magic stones for tools free of charge. The ones in charge of that are Dungeon Masters, so we should be able to arrange this. And... yes, I shall allow Core 564 to keep the scythe.”

And so, the payment for Mikan and the others was decided. It seemed her plan to pay Keima in part through them would not come to pass.

The undead Dark Fenrir guarding a grand door had its corpse purified, making it vanish into dust. Behind the door was Core 10, his skeleton face in full view as he stood in front of his true Core. It seemed they had finally arrived at the bottom floor—Core 10’s Core Room.

“Guh, guh, y-you, you lot! Standing in, my grave! With, muddy feet! Die, d-d-d-d-death, you’ve come, to death!” Core 10 barked, scattering sparks in the air.

“What exactly is going on here, Chloe?” Haku asked. “He seems rather ill.”

“I cannot say for sure what is causing this, but... he does not appear to be sane.”

“I suppose this will be the final battle regardless.”

It seemed he was still as ill as when he had fled, but that in turn was good for Haku. She sent her Shine Minotaurs forward and directed them to attack.

“Y-Y-You, will, pay! Cursed, be you! A-As many, I’m taking, down with me, as possible! I-In the de, depths... gugh, guh, ghahghaha! {Teleport!}”

And so, Core 10 teleported away, leaving his true body behind.

“Erm?” Haku said.

He had indeed abandoned his Dungeon Core, which shone with a faint white light as it sat all alone. It was... unusually weak, but not a Dummy Core. It was the real thing. A human might have been fooled, but a Dungeon Core would never mistake another true Core. And to Dungeon Cores, their true bodies—their Cores—being destroyed meant death. An avatar escaping far away meant nothing, for the avatar would die when the Core did. Such was the law set forth by the God of Darkness.

In short, Core 10 had essentially left his heart completely exposed and undefended.

“...My lady. What was Core 10 hoping to accomplish here?”

Why had Core 10 teleported there? Was it possible that he simply did not know? A First Lot Core with so much experience? It wasn’t impossible. Only a small number of Cores had seen the destruction of another Core with their own eyes, excluding those of the Traitor

faction.

"I do not know. However, this is a good opportunity. Whatever Core 10 is planning, it will be meaningless once his true body is destroyed. Finish the job before he returns," Haku ordered.

"Understood."

At her direction, a Minotaur swung his axe down at Core 10's Core. The blade stabbed deep inside it. The blow was fatal. However, the Core still lived. The Minotaur pulled back its axe, lifted it high in the air... then slammed it back down on the same spot.

And so, Dungeon Core Number 10 was destroyed.

The dungeon collapsed alongside it, taking down many of the monsters in Haku's army with it... but that was all according to plan, and Haku had already planned ahead to manage how much DP would be lost. In the end, Core 10 truly had taken down many with him, as he had said.

Core 564 got wrapped up in the collapse and was buried alive, but he safely got out due to Mikan using the "Forced Summon" command.

From there, Haku challenged Core 10 to another Dungeon Battle and received the following message: *As the specified Dungeon Core does not exist, your challenge was rejected.* That message would not show if he had escaped through a Dummy Core they missed or some such. In other words, Core 10 had been eliminated for sure.

"Thus completes our mission. Excellent work, everyone," Haku declared, and with that the Core 10 raid was complete. The participating Dungeon Cores said their farewells to Haku, then cut their contact. She would be rewarding them in secret at a later date in addition to paying for each of their war expenditures.

"The deed is done, my lady," Chloe said, presenting a cream soda to Haku.

"Why thank you, Chloe. Indeed, and defeating a First Lot opponent was as tiring as anticipated."

Perhaps it would have been wise to have Keima participate rather than avoiding it for fear of the payment that would require, but in the end, victory came regardless.

"...Hm?" Chloe suddenly felt that something was off about Haku.

"Is something wrong, Chloe?"

"No, my lady. I just felt that something was off about your clothes... Is it just my imagination, perhaps?"

"My clothes...? Well, I did select something a tad more flashy to suit the scale of this Core 10 battle," Haku replied. She was wearing an ao-dai-esque dress that accentuated her figure. The slit hanging above the crotch shook with a golden jewel at the end, which left her thighs hidden yet showed glimpses of them at the same time, in a highly stimulating sight.

“...My lady. Shall we sleep together tonight?”

“Oh my, did I turn you on, perhaps? I suppose it’s unavoidable as we are all high from battle... But I must say, you have some courage inviting your master to bed.”

“Th-That was not my intention! I suggested it merely out of... of... necessity! There may still be lingering foes, and I speak only as your bodyguard!”

“Oh, I know, Chloe,” Haku said, giggling as she teased Chloe.

For her to be joking like that, Chloe thought, Haku was probably more turned on than her.

Chapter 1

Several months had passed since the Holy Kingdom more or less fell under my control.

We got a message from Haku. It seemed she had finally finished destroying Dungeon Core Number 10. Mikan had also sent a proud message saying he was done, and apparently he got a pretty hefty payment.

“Sounds like they managed to take down the former pope safe and sound,” I said.

“Awesome! We should go on a date now, Keima!” Rokuko exclaimed, despite there being no connection between the topics.

“What does this have to do with a date?”

“Core 10 being gone means we can feel safe playing around in the Holy Kingdom, doesn’t it? Okay, let’s go borrow Narikin and Rokufa’s bodies.”

“I feel like we were already doing that... though you do realize that the papal couple randomly walking around causes problems on its own, right?”

Putting aside the fact that Rokufa had become Pope Narikin’s official wife, since the idea to begin with had been that they were married, the two of them had become too high in status to just casually walk around. Incidentally, Alca the High Priestess was doggedly aiming for the spot of second wife, but that’s another story.

“Then we can make more copies of ourselves and possess them. Haku gave us a mountain of DP as payment, so let’s not waste any of it.”

Well, she has a point...

Despite all the money and DP we had, I wasn’t really using any due to a sense of frugality, and so really using it for fun like Rokuko was suggesting wouldn’t be a big deal. Not to mention, since we were getting monthly royalties passively from the monster races in the imperial coliseum, we were more or less living in luxury.

Passive income... I love the sound of that. Is there anything better? I think not!

“Oh, but wait. Core 10 dying means Haku won’t need to have guards on us, doesn’t it?” Rokuko asked.

“Oh, yeah. I guess they’ll be leaving.”

Really, as soon as Narikin became the pope, we had no reason at

all to fear assassins being sent, which meant Haku had no reason not to call back her spies... or rather, her guards. However, for fear of Core 10 doing something or another from the shadows, the guards had remained. Incidentally, the current spy-slash-guard was Amelia the Lamia. She had made a daily habit out of transforming her snake lower half into human legs and soaking them in the onsen. Though she would skip the transformation part when nobody else was there.

“Once the town doesn’t have guards, we can go on dates in Tsia or Pavella whenever we want, right? Or even right here in Goren.”

“...Yeah, I guess?”

“Still, that’s no reason to give up on dates in the Holy Kingdom. Let’s go do lots of stuff, Keima! We have enough income to do whatever we want! Oh, though Soto and the others might get jealous if we don’t bring them... Maybe we should double up on dates, one with each other and one with the family?” Rokuko said, giggling with a bit of an evil smile.

“Er, I’d rather sleep, but... alright.”

And so it was.

Incidentally, when I went to tell Amelia she could probably leave now...

“Guh?! W-Well, I guess... we really don’t need to stay here anymore...? Ngggh, but this job was important stress relief for me! My vacation time...!”

She was filled with profound regret. She said she would keep working until the absolute end of the deadline, and said, “I would like to visit on my days off too, if I may! Please, Lady Rokuko, Lady Soto, please!” but that can be a secret between you and me... *Hey, Soto! Isn’t that scarf you’re wearing actually Amelia’s leg warmer? The one she uses for her huge snake tail?* Don’t tell me... Are you taking bribes?

* * *

While listening to Narikin’s reports on how the artificial dungeons were unchanged despite Core 10’s destruction, I continued advancing my dungeon modifications. Thanks to a little focus, I completed all the ideas I had collected before (excluding Neruneh’s ‘Lustful Succubus Juice Trap’), and put them all into place. Rokuko was highly satisfied to have new features in her dungeon. We would be going on a trip through the dungeon to check them all out soon.

Anyway, I was scared that Neruneh would implement her idea on her own if left to her own devices, so I requested she construct a... certain magic tool instead.

“Here is the magitech engine made with alcheeemy,” she said.

“Oho...”

We were in Neruneh’s magic lab within the dungeon. Atop her

table was precisely what I had ordered—an engine that ran on mana. It was small enough for me to envelop with both hands, and looked like a square box with a hexagonal axle stabbed through the middle. There were depressions on the top for setting keystones.

“You can put in a mana stone, or pour in manaaaa... although these are used in the Demon Kingdom’s magic tool Golems anywaaaay. I had the sample you made with {Create Golem}, Masteeer, so it was easy to develooop.”

She had succeeded in making a Golem Engine through the Demon King’s alchemy, one that didn’t rely on my {Create Golem}.

The axle sticking out of the engine spun around and around. Rather than have a Golem directly move the axle around, the engine made use of a Golem axle that fundamentally only spun itself. That produced more output.

“Sooo, I made iiiiit, but what will you use it foor? Is it just going to spiiin?”

“You can use it for a lot. I mean... simply put, horse-drawn carriages won’t need horses with this.”

“I seeeee, so they’ll be magitech engine caaaars?” Neruneh nodded to herself.

“You can also have them in place of waterwheels or windmills, they can crush powder, and with a bit of effort, they can even work loops.”

“Ooooh... It’s revolutionaaaary,” Neruneh said, looking at the engine again. “Eeeerm, I’ve been keeping it a seeecret, but wouldn’t this be a big deal if we made it a dungeon drooop?”

“Whoa?!”

Now that she mentioned it, that was exactly right. Back on Earth, the Industrial Revolution had exploded into existence once the steam engine had provided a stable source of power not influenced by weather or location. What I had here was the same thing but with mana stones instead of coal; it was serious business. Really, considering how mana was clean, unlike coal, it was basically the most powerful power source imaginable. If we made these dungeon drops, then we would be swarmed with excavators. But at the same time, openly saying Neruneh made it would cause similar problems for her.

Unfortunately it looked like we had no choice but to shelve the engine... unless?

“Wait. Let’s have Narikin distribute them! With his power and influence, nobody will get in the way, and we can call it an advanced form of the Narikin Engine. We can even suggest keeping currently existing dungeons alive on the basis of needing them for the magic stones.”

“Aaah, liiike, we can say he just came up with it by accident while researching the Narikin Engineee?”

The Narikin Engine was a fake perpetual motion machine that supposedly worked using dungeons as a power source. These two engines could be connected pretty naturally.

“Yep, yep. This is a pretty genius idea, if I do say so myself.”

“It is a good ideaaa! That’s Master for yooou!”

The only flaw was that it would strengthen the influence of the Holy Kingdom, which one could safely call the ideological enemy of the empire, but well... That shouldn’t be a problem. It was under the control of one of my subordinates, after all. It might as well be a vassal state to the empire. Using it as our scapegoat would surely not be a problem at all.

“By the waaay, about my paymeeent...”

“Hm? Well, this thing’s pretty good, so ask for anything. It’s worth that much,” I said. I needed to pay Neruneh fairly.

“I want a gimmick of my own in the dungeoon, so I want permission to build a gimmick with Succubus bodily fluids in—”

“Anything but that.”

Or at the very least, come up with something else that I wouldn’t need to reject instantly.

“Hrm... In that caaase, I want to do joint research with Sotooo.”

“Soto...?” I asked. I hadn’t expected her name to come up.

“I heard that with Soto’s heeelp, I can use expensive scrolls as much as I waaant. I want to do research to see if I can have Golems learn the spells directlly.”

“I see. Well, that’s something I’d want you to be doing anyway. And in fact, that’s basically the research I was asking you to do in the first place.”

“It worked with magic tooools, but I want to do more reseaaarch, soooo...”

Soto’s {Teensy Reproduction} could make duplicates of anything, including magic potion and scrolls. The duplicates disappeared after an hour, but the effects of the items—say, recovered mana from a potion, or learning a skill through a scroll—remained. Food would apparently disappear from one’s stomach, though. Being able to reuse consumables infinitely seemed to put the skill on the upper end of support Hero skills. Thanks to it, all of the Named monsters in the dungeons (and that included the rats) could now use {Storage} and {Healing}. Though as a consequence, Soto could now show up anywhere through her {Storage} dungeon.

“By the waaay, I would like both the expensive magic scrooolls and Recording Golems with the chants recordeeed.”

“You got it. I’ll give 500,000 DP of research funds alongside the

Golems. Use them however you want. I'll go ask Soto for her help."

This is just a guess... but if I offered free use of Neruneh's socks, Soto wouldn't turn me down. I shall pray their research bears fruit.

"Woow, five hundred thousand Dungeon Poooints? I wonder how many of me you could buy with thaaat..."

"Probably like thirty-three. Though if you flip that around, you could also get five hundred of me," I replied. After all, Rokuko had gotten me from the 1,000 DP gacha. How nostalgic.

Neruneh's Perspective

Neruneh got permission from Keima to do research with Soto. She gleefully visited the {Storage} dungeon, where she found her lord's daughter Soto and a Silky she didn't recognize.

"Oooh? Which Silky is thiiiis?" Neruneh asked.

"Greetings. I am Kaikomayu, a servant of Lady Soto. You may call me Mayu."

"My my, how poliiite."

Neruneh and the Silky bowed their heads at each other.

"Did you summon her, Sotooo?"

"Uh-huh. She'll be cleaning my dungeon. And I *did* get papa's permission for it."

It turned out she had saved up the allowance she had earned from using {Teensy Reproduction} for scrolls to summon a Silky of her own.

"Your {Storage} dungeon needs cleaning toooo?"

"Well, technically. There's rooms where I'm keeping bandits and stuff. It doesn't really need cleaning, but... then, I realized something. If I harvest socks from my own monsters, I can eat all the socks I could ever want. Thus, I summoned a maid, but... but...!" Soto let out a heavy sigh. "It just isn't... it isn't moe. It doesn't fire me up. It's like... It's like socks off my own feet!"

"Aaaah."

Dungeon monsters were, for all intents and purposes, a part of the dungeon itself. And while Soto loved all socks, no matter what gender or species from which they came, no matter whether they came from family or strangers, the only socks Soto did not want... were her own.

"So basically, when offered the opportunity to eat your socks to my heart's content, Neruneh, I leaped at the chance."

"Oh my, oh my. I'll cut down on the {Purifications} for yooou."

"You know what's up! Eheheheh." Soto gave a cute yet perverted smile.

The Silky saw her beloved master's joy and became jealous of Neruneh, who noticed that and felt that indeed, this Silky sure was

Soto's monster.

And so, they delved right into the research.

"Goleem, use the magic scroool," Neruneh said, ordering a Golem made through {Create Golem}. It picked up a scroll and waved it around. "Do you not know how to use iiit?"

"Why not say, 'Pour mana into the scroll'?"

They tried that out, and it seemed the Golem could not pour mana into the scroll.

"I suppose they just don't have that functiooon."

"Hrm hrm hrm. There is mana flowing through Golems, so surely there's some way for them to do this, but... I guess not everything can always work out." Soto glared at the Golem. Golems operated on mana to begin with, and so they had it within them. However, as they operated on mana, it was possible they had no means of getting it outside themselves.

"I want to hear papa's thoughts on this! What's he even doing while we're pouring our hearts and souls into research?"

"Going on a date in the Holy Kingdooom, maybeee? You might have a little brother or sister soooon, Sotooo."

"Hrm, another date in the Holy Kingdom... Ah! Right, I got it!" Soto exclaimed, hopping up and down.

"What is iiit? Excited for a younger sibliiing?"

"Not that! We just need to possess the Golem! Then we can have him use the scroll! Basically..."

Even if Golems didn't have the ability to use scrolls, one could possess them and force them to do things they weren't built for. And since scrolls impacted the bodies of those who used them, the Golems would still learn the magic.

"QED!"

"Oooh! That's smaaart, let's try iiit!"

It was a revolutionary idea. Soto swiftly took ownership of the Golem Neruneh made, then possessed it.

* * *

As I was casually signing paperwork in my office, Neruneh came to give a report. Apparently she already had results for the research I'd approved the other day.

However, her stride was a bit unenthusiastic. It must not have gone well.

"In shooort, my research with Soto found that you can make Golems learn spells by possessing theeeem..." Neruneh said with a heavy sigh.

"That's pretty good, isn't it? Why so down?"

"Weeell... We learned the Golem could only use the spell when

possesseed... And it was limited to spells both the possessor and the Golem kneew.”

Apparently, even if you ordered the Golem to use the spell, it wouldn't use it since it didn't have that function naturally. It was the same as replaying a recorded incantation. Thus, you had to possess the Golem to use it. And if the possessor didn't know the spell themselves, they wouldn't be able to think of the incantation for it.

Furthermore, activating the spell took the Golem's mana... in other words, the very life force that kept it together. You were limited by the mana used with {Create Golem} and the magic stone inside it, and using spells would greatly impact how long it could function.

“...I see, I guess it makes sense a Golem made with {Create Golem} can't use any more mana than it already has.”

“They'd be useless without a fairly powerful magic stooone.”

The magic stones used in {Create Golem} were nothing special. They had experimented with using very high-quality magic stones worth 100,000 DP, but even then the results were far from impressive.

“In shooort, it's not very practicaaal...”

“I see...”

Needing possessors realistically prevented them from being used in traps, and we would need to buy time to use them in battles. Seemed like they were about on the edge of casting one good {Element Burst}. It only cost as much as six low-rank spells, after all.

“That said, won't their mana just be refilled if they're in a dungeon?”

“Only very slowly over tiime, and if they run out they'll count as deaad.”

Being dead meant no regeneration. And even without that, while Golems were fine when working normally, it would apparently take a lot of time for them to recover from pretty aggressive magic use. Iron Golems summoned with DP had slightly larger capacities, and they wanted to try it out on an Orichalcum Golem. Making those with {Create Golem} certainly took an enormous amount of mana, and it was likely they would be a lot more practical.

“If only they didn't need to be possessed, this still could have been useful.”

“Riiight? I wanted to make a Golem Bag that knows {Storage} or somethiiiing.”

Yeah, that would've been useful.

“Oh yeah; maybe Soto could do something like that on her own, though?”

“Hmmm? Detaaails?”

“Like, Soto can connect her {Storage} dungeon to our {Storages} on her own, right? What about making her do something like that?”

“Ooooh, that could woook. If we mix it into the magitech engine, the owner can recharge its mana toooo.”

Opening and closing {Storage} took mana, but not much on its own. Connecting a merchant’s carriage to a {Storage} magitech engine would get you a portal that could travel with you all over the world.

“Buuut, Soto is already doing thaaat. With biiirds.”

“What. Really? Hm... Birds, huh?”

It seemed my daughter had gotten ahead of me and made my ideas a reality before I even thought of them. Not to mention, a living creature would regenerate mana on their own, and a bird made in a dungeon could fly anywhere specified. You could feed them through the {Storage} dungeon, and they could go anywhere survivable. And once they landed, you could place rats that also knew {Storage} to go to the next place. And so Soto was doing that, apparently.

“Apparently she had an epiphany when she saw you teaching the rats {Storage} earlieeer, Masteeer. She said she can already travel anywhere within the empire, Daide, or the Holy Kingdooom.”

“That’s my daughter for you.”

Her current objective was Wakoku, apparently. I hadn’t been there before. *Feels like Sototemporarily the Goddess of Time and Space will be known as a mysterious goddess that shows up all over the world at random times...*

“She’s not actually going off on trips though, right? As her father, I’d be worried about her going on solo journeys.”

“Don’t woorry, she said she was keeping it as a trump caaaard.”

“I see. Wait... Should you have told me that?”

“I don’t think she would miiind?”

In other words, she probably had other trump cards. Whom does she take after... me? Yeah, probably me.

* * *

Peaceful days flowed by, and before I knew it I was seeing Amelia off as she left for the imperial capital. She threw a tantrum at the end, whining, “Lady Rokukooo! I don’t wanna leaaave!” but ultimately she left with a vow that she would return on her next holiday. She also mentioned that the next person to come back would bring the Divine Mattress with them.

As far as the Divine Pillow went, they were ready to lend it out whenever; all I had to do was say the word to Maiodore. The Divine Nightcap in the Holy Kingdom could also be sent over whenever I needed it, since it was owned by Pope Narikin.

I had the Divine Blanket, Divine Quilt, Divine Pajama, and Divine Underwear with me—I could get all seven at once at this point.

“Looks like I’ve finally got a full set,” I said aloud.

"It's oddly moving," Rokuko said.

The legends said one who gathered all seven pieces of the Divine Bedding and used them at once to sleep would become an immortal god, who could be lazy and stay in bed forever—although they would only be a demigod. Basically on the same level as Rokuko and the other Dungeon Cores.

"So, Amelia's gone now," Rokuko said with a grin once we returned to the Master Room. "Let's go on a date! You kept stalling even though we finished the renovation since blah blah we're under watch blah blah every move being recorded, but now it's finally time to date! Let's go on a date!"

She repeated the date part twice since it was important. Well, okay. I *had* renovated the dungeon to make it a date spot.

"Alright, let's go see the changes from an adventurer's perspective."

"Eheheh, I saw them through the map, but I've been holding back on seeing them up close."

"That's some impressive patience."

"For things like this, the longer you hold it in, the more moved you'll be when it's finally time."

So Rokuko and I would be going on a dungeon date, pretty much.

We put on our adventurer equipment and met up in front of the dungeon. One might wonder why we didn't just go there directly together, and the answer was that Rokuko wanted the full date experience, which included meeting up. Aaand... I was the one who had to stand around waiting. Ah, what a blue sky. Ah, what lovely weather.

"Oh, town chief. Rare to see you all armored up nowadays. What's happening?" asked a local adventurer passing by.

"Well, Rokuko pushed for it. She wants to see a new spot I found in the dungeons for herself."

"I see, I see. Guess even you have to go to the dungeon when the wifey asks, huh?"

"Wifey? We're not married yet, y'know."

"Does it make a difference?"

"Rokuko's big sister hasn't given her permission, so... yes."

"Ah, familial stuff. Nobles sure have it rough."

Less nobles and more the imperial family, but... yeah, fairly similar.

As we were chatting, Rokuko came out of the inn. "Sorry for the wait, Keima!"

She was wearing relatively light scouting gear consisting of flexible shorts, black knee socks from the dungeon, a T-shirt, and a jacket. The belt on her hips had a short sword and test tubes with potions inside, which all in all was proper adventuring gear.

The three centimeters or so of pale thigh visible between her shorts and the knee socks kind of draws the eye. So this is the famous “absolute territory”...

“Keima, you’ve got a pervy look in your eyes.”

“I get the feeling your hot babe stat has risen a few points somehow.”

“Eheheh, Ichika coordinated this outfit for me. Looks like it was a huge success.” Rokuko spun around, her long blonde hair fluttering behind her. Her smile was dazzling.

Right, Ichika used to be a scout herself. She knows how to put together a set of light equipment. Feels a bit too light, but I’ll protect her, and it’s not like her own dungeon will be threatening to her, so yeah.

I glanced beside me and saw the adventurer I had been talking to staring, so I flicked his forehead. “Stop staring. This is my woman.”

“Ah, whoops. I wish I was dating a hottie like this. You know what, fuck you. I’m gonna go seduce a nun!”

“Er, good luck?”

“Yeah!”

I wasn’t really following his logic, but I watched the adventurer run off with a highly motivated grin. It wasn’t against Beddhist rules for nuns to have romantic partners, and if he caught one’s attention she would probably play along. They were Succubi, after all.

“Okay, let’s go,” Rokuko said, holding out a hand. I was a bit dubious about entering a dungeon while holding hands, but I took her soft hand anyway.

Once inside the dungeon, we began seeing adventurers here and there. We had stopped holding hands by that point since it would be suspicious to do so in the dungeon, but we were rubbing up against each other as we walked down the halls and avoided traps. Our [Cave of Greed] had an above-average item drop rate, and various Japanese goods such as playing cards were valued fairly highly, even though I thought they were kind of crappy drops. Thus, a surprising number of adventurers could be found in these upper levels.

“Lots of visitors today.”

“Mhm. And it’s because I’m attractive, right?” Rokuko asked proudly. She then casually used the map to hunt for paths which didn’t have any other adventurers.

Oh, okay, use the place function to skip ahead a bit. Got it, got it.

“So, Keima, where should we go first?”

“I guess the first tourist spot, because why not?”

“Good point. This is a date, after all,” she said, and so we skipped directly to one of the greed trap rooms at the edge of the labyrinth. It had a pedestal in the middle into which a sword was stabbed. Each room was different in size, but this one was about as large as a tennis

court. There was only one entrance: a narrow hallway, outfitted with spike traps that shot out.

“We made it just as a way to give people a chance to try out Magic Blades, but everyone ended up thinking it was a trap room. Funny how that turns out.”

“It’s true. I remember thinking how dumb humans must be to not notice they could get out by putting it back in the pedestal. I mean, you’re a human too, but you know.”

“What can I say, intuition RNG is a bitch.”

Which reminded me: I wondered how the first victims of this trap, Uzou and Muzou, were doing. I was pretty sure when we met in the Demon Realm they’d said they were about to finish paying back their debt and return to town, but... that was a while ago. Hopefully they didn’t fall into debt somewhere else and get delayed.

“Keima?”

“Oops, I was thinking about something. What’s up?”

“Let’s get going. And in order, too.”

In order... That means the Inn of Greed is up next.

We passed through the labyrinth (using a bit of a shortcut) and entered a broad room. It was the ruins of the [Wisdom Gate] area, which had developed into a rest spot for adventurers. On the side were individual rooms which would give you items if you stayed inside for half a day, with people nearby selling futons and preserved food to make some cash, alongside renting futons.

“This place sure has gotten popular, hm?” Rokuko said.

“You get a place to sleep for free and even items for it. Not a bad deal.”

“Maybe there’s just a lot of lazy people?”

“I might be an influence to my people.”

“Oh, let’s go look at the stores,” Rokuko said, ignoring my self-deprecation and going to a rug spread out at a store. She said “stores,” but they were really just a few tiny ones. And their items were as described. They showed up to match the time when the Inn of Greed would open each morning.

Rokuko flipped through a rental book. “I’m surprised you all can run a store in a place like this. Are you making a profit?”

“Can’t say we earn all that much, ma’am.”

“Really? Then why open one?”

“We were hired by the Dyne Company for this. Mr. Dyne said the inn’s a reliable source of good times, so we just grab ’em when they get ’em.”

“Oh, so Dyne runs these stores, then?”

“And we can sleep here too, so it’s all good for earning a bit of cash.”

They shared the books and other products which needed to be preserved long-term between themselves and brought them into the Inn of Greed rooms such that they weren't absorbed by the dungeon. The carpet spread beneath the products was also there to indicate the products belonged to them and were not to be sucked up, apparently. Not that we would suck those up either way.

"This sure is a lot like the shifts at the inn. Keep up the good work."

"Yes ma'am! Good to have support from the town chief's wife!"

"Good man! I'll buy everything you have from this end to here!" Rokuko said, pleased at having been called my wife.

"Hey, you know you're not gonna eat all this food. It's actually not good to buy out a store's stock, y'know?"

"Oh, don't worry, town chief. Already sold to the regulars, so I was about to close up shop anyhow."

"Still, we could just buy this stuff in the town, Rokuko..."

"Nuh-uh. I'm investing in this store due to their positive spirit. There's no point buying them anywhere else."

Is that how it works?

"Alrighty then, I'll sell all the lighter stuff I was gonna bring home with me. In fact, now I've got a lighter load and can hunt more on the way back!"

"Seems like it's a win-win for us."

In any case, I went ahead and put the bought goods into my {Storage}. Bringing it home didn't really matter much when you could put it in a timeless void.

We didn't have time to spend a whole session in the Inn of Greed, and the items given would be our own. They were selected by the fairy in charge of operating the dungeon, Elka. We advanced farther into the dungeon instead.

Next up was the spiral stairway. Normally this was a highly dangerous area where the floors would give out and the walls would push out to kill you through fall damage, but naturally we had a free pass. It was just a normal stairway down. But Rokuko got bored since it was so long and unremarkable, so we took a shortcut to skip to the bottom.

"Let's hurry. The new stuff is up next, right?"

"Yep. I put them in the storeroom area."

The storeroom area followed the spiral stairway. There were Golem Blades inside the storerooms. I made them myself, and since they were made out of Iron Golem corpses they were free. And yet, they continued to be highly popular. If I weren't a Dungeon Master, I might have supported myself through Golem Blades. *Though that has nothing to do with me now.*

“This way, right? Let’s hurry!”

“Don’t jump ahead too much. I’m technically supposed to be the vanguard in our party.”

Although not many people went past the spiral stairway area due to the uptick in danger and thus in death rates, some adventurers did go this far for the Magic Blades. And at the moment, there just so happened to be a party here to check out the new gimmick: the Mini Maze of Wrath.

Ding ding ding ding! A bell-like sound reminiscent of an analogue alarm clock filled the air. I looked up and saw a hole in open in the ceiling, from which several Stone Golems appeared and attacked the adventurers.

“Guh!”

“Idiot! What are you doing...?! Take them down!”

“Aaah, if only these were Iron Golems too, we could have sold them!”

The party of three adventurers began fighting the Golems.

“Heeey, need any help?” I called. The adventurers glanced this way.

“Who’s there... Wait, your holiness the pope?! I’m a Beddhist! Can I pay you back with a donation to the church?!”

“If you let me take your place, sure.”

“Alright, we’d love your help!”

“Sure.”

I would have been fine doing it for free, but things like this needed to be done with the understanding of both parties. I took down a Stone Golem with {Element Shot}. Then again, and again. One killing shot brought them down.

“Whoa... Has the pope always been this strong?”

“I don’t believe it... Mages are scary!”

“Nah, only the best of the best mages can take things down this easy...”

Yeah, I was probably trying to show off for Rokuko. I looked her way, and... she looked exasperated. Riiight. These were monsters from our dungeon that we prepared ourselves. I was basically punching myself in the face.

“Did you really need to use magic here?”

“It’s easier this way.”

I didn’t even need to hide the fact I could shoot out {Element Shot} without a chant, since plenty of people knew that already. Really, it was cheaper to use than a poorly modified {Fireball}, and I wanted to use it whenever I could as my main attack.

“Hear that, boys? Judging by the wify’s comment, he could’ve taken them down with or without magic.”

“That’s the pope for you. Not just anyone can bring their wife deep into a dungeon for a stroll...”

“Wait a second. What if the wife’s real strong too? Can’t judge a book by the cover—y’know, like the Ebony Guard Dog.”

The Ebony Guard Dog was what all the adventurers called Niku.

I think my nickname was the Dragon Tamer? But more importantly, when did “Rokuko = my wife” become a fact of life everyone just accepted? Let’s see... okay, she’s grinning ear to ear. Yeah, she did this, somehow.

“Oh, right, you want to challenge the maze. Go right on ahead! Can we watch?” the adventurer asked, letting us skip ahead as promised.

The Mini Maze of Wrath was the gimmick the Silkies had suggested, wherein you had to pull a stick through mazelike gaps in a wall. The stick grew out naturally at the start, and if you hit the wall then it would retract and go back to the start. This would also make the bell ring and drop attack Golems like before. Incidentally, the Silkies had secured exclusive rights to cleaning the gimmick. Though the three of them had fought over who would get to clean it first and such.

“Rokuko, want to give it a shot?”

“You don’t mind?”

“Not like the Golems would pose a threat anyway.”

If there hadn’t been visitors, we could have just made the Golems not come out, but you know, appearances.

“Okay, here I go! Um, you start by pulling it, right?” Rokuko asked, pulling it. The stick jutted out a bit. That was the start switch, and the gimmick was now active. As for how the adventurers knew something so arbitrary... I had leaked the details to the Adventurer’s Guild myself after “discovering” it. This gimmick wouldn’t be trapping anybody in rooms, but I expected people not to know it worked otherwise.

“I just need to make sure the stick doesn’t hit the walls, right?”

“Yep. Pretty sure covering the edges with your hand or cloth doesn’t work either; anything touching it at all counts as an out.”

“I didn’t even think about that.”

Otherwise, it’d be way too easy to beat. The stick, which grew directly from the wall, was like a super lever which could be moved freely in all directions. But over time it increasingly dragged downward... or rather, it got heavier and thus more difficult to hold up.

Rokuko gripped it firmly and pulled it through the wall’s maze. First a straight line, then a curve upward; everything was smooth at first, but beyond that point were gimmicks like pistons and spinning

crosses. You would have to match the movements to slip through.

“Ngh, guh, guh, this is pretty hard. It feels like the stick is actually just getting heavier.”

“Oh yeah, it actually does get heavier over time; you’ll want to finish it fast.”

“Wait, I didn’t hear anything about that?!”

“Sorry, I forgot to mention it.”

The key to victory here was how speedily you could finish the early obstacles. From there, despite her whining, Rokuko cleared the spinning crosses and got to the labyrinth zone. It was probably starting to get hard for her to hold. Aaand suddenly the stick slipped in her hand and hit the edge.

“Oops.”

Ring ring ring! The stick slid back into the wall and rang a bell. Unfortunately, she had failed, and now Stone Golems were falling from the roof. {Element Shot}, {Element Shot}.

“Grrr, now I’m mad! One more try!”

“Why not take a rest for a bit? We have people waiting their turn, so.”

“Er, nah, no need to worry about us... Holy shit, he’s strong...”

“By the way, your holiness, you were the first to find this, right? Do you maybe know something else about it?”

“If you’re this strong, feels like you could test whatever you wanted and not give a crap about the Golem attacks.”

The adventurers nodded among themselves.

“Okay, Keima, show us how it’s done,” Rokuko said.

“Wait, me? Er, are you sure?”

“Go ahead, go ahead,” the three adventurers said in unison, giving up their place immediately. Perhaps our deal from earlier was still in effect. OK.

That said, I was in fact the inventor of this thing. I had mastered it while test-playing it, and I knew exactly what parts to move and where. Hell, my Wearable Golem even had the motions memorized, so I could even do a tool-assisted speedrun if I wanted to. Though putting that aside, since it would be cheating, clearing it normally would still be pretty easy. It was normal for what developers considered somewhat challenging to be seen as brutally hard by players, so I had put it a fair bit below what would be difficult for me.

Thus, I cleared the mini maze, the elevator zone, the rest spot in the way, and even the somewhat-difficult double whirlpool zone one after another. Once I hit the goal, the four onlookers let out awed noises and clapped. Heh, stop it, you’re making me blush.

“That’s my Keima for you! So, what happens next?”

“As you can see, the door over there opens,” I said. A door next to

the goal had unlocked and popped open a crack once I finished. There were three small rooms on the other side, with treasure chests in each that could be seen through windows in the doors.

“So, we get three chests now?”

“Nope. You pick one door, and the others stay locked.”

“So if you want all of them, you have to clear it three times,” Rokuko said.

“About that... What’s inside the chests moves around each time. It’ll take more than three times unless you’re pretty lucky.”

Not to mention, when you opened an empty chest, you wouldn’t be able to tell whether it was one you had just opened or whether someone had come before and gotten it. The fact that you would have rage with no target to vent it on inspired the name, the Mini Maze of Wrath.

“Wow, it really is a Mini Maze of Wrath!” Rokuko exclaimed.

“Yup. I used my rights as the one who found it to name the gimmick, but I came up with something pretty good, if I do say so myself,” I said while Rokuko randomly opened a door. Inside was a silken handkerchief with floral embroidery.

“Oh, this is pretty good.”

That was probably a handkerchief Kinue had made. Elka must have fiddled with the rewards so Rokuko would get it.

“Well, it’s yours now.”

“Really? Thanks, Keima,” Rokuko said with a smile. *You’re welcome.*

From there, we split from the adventurers (who collectively were pumped about “studying my teachings”) and headed to the next gimmick.

“Next up is Soto and Niku’s gimmick, right?” Rokuko asked. “The whole ‘show off the treasure’ thing, I think.”

“Yep. So called: The Vault of Envy.”

The Vault of Envy... In practice, it was a vault with transparent walls. You could see inside it, but not get inside. The gimmick room itself was a large square with paths leading away on all four sides. In the center was a small room with transparent walls that had treasure within.

“There’s a mountain of gold coins, Keima! And gems, and even crystal Golem statues! It’s a hoard of treasure!”

“There’s transparent walls, alright? Don’t try to jump into the pile.”

“I-I know that. It’s glass, right?”

It was actually made out of polycarbonate, to be precise. With our huge DP stock leeway, I’d tried using a bunch of Earth materials and ended up completing this transparent vault in the image of a massive

aquarium. Polycarbonate was a naturally hard material that could resist both blunt and sharp force, with it being used on Earth for shields in riot police. And since I set the walls as dungeon walls, they would repair themselves instantly even if they did get damaged. One could even repair degradation over time. Minor damage barely even cost DP to fix, so they would maintain their transparency forever, which was nice.

“This vault would stand even if an elephant tackled it,” I said.

“What even is that? Anyway, it sure is something to see a literal mountain of treasure like this.”

“It took a lot of time to make, y’know. I had to make fake coins with gold plating, fake gems, fake treasure blades, and fake ornaments, too.”

“Oh, it’s all fake.”

The mountain of coins within the vault consisted entirely of fakes. I used {Create Golem} to shape rocks into coins, then put a gold coating on them. The fake gems were candy and sugar, shaped into jewels through {Create Golem} and colored a bit. It was kinda like a school science fair project. The fake blades and ornaments used both of the techniques. I bought decorative swords from the catalog, then gave them a metal coating and embedded them with fake gems.

To be fair, if one collected all the gold plating on everything, they’d probably have a single gold coin’s worth. Still would be worth less than bringing back a single Magic Blade, and would be harder, but yeah. Honestly, I had probably put far too much effort into making the coating as thin as physically possible.

“The only thing one could actually call treasure is the Crystal Golem statue, probably. Part of it has an orichalcum coating.”

“Since the ornaments on it are fake, the statue itself is probably worth more than anything else...”

It, too, was made out of polycarbonate. Even with fake ornaments on, the statue itself was more expensive. The joints had an orichalcum coating (with a gold coating on top to hide it), with the idea being that it would come alive and attack anyone who actually did manage to get inside somehow. The sword it had was a Golem Blade with a gold coating, so it was practical, too.

Though to get inside one would have to use {Teleport}, and it was filled with carbon dioxide, so they would probably die even if the Golem didn’t do anything.

“Still, knowing that something is right there and you can’t get it... is kinda... you know?”

“Well, that’s the idea.”

The whole point of the Vault of Envy was to frustrate someone that they could *almost* get the treasure, but not quite. If from the start

you considered it as something unobtainable, it was as light-hearted as a museum, but from a path leading in the transparent walls were basically invisible, so... Everyone who got here first would be like: “Hell yeah, treasure...! Wait, what’s with these walls?!”

Incidentally, the walls had all sorts of meaningful buttons and levers attached, but in reality they did nothing at all. There was no point trying to solve the puzzle. Beyond that, the halls were patrolled by the Haniwa Golems that had once served as bosses, so if you stayed too long you would be attacked.

“Since I timed it so we’d come right after that patrol, we dodged them. Or rather, I had them avoid us.”

“Oh, that explains why nobody’s here. I thought there would be someone trying to puzzle through it.”

“It’s important to be quiet in museums, after all,” I said. The people who come here always really noisily messed with the switches and levers. *Maybe I should have put a secret code in there or something.*

“By the way, I kinda feel suspicious about that cloth on that display case,” Rokuko said.

“Soto made that. It’s a... sock display case.” On top of the stand was a folded sock, atop which rested a fake jewel.

“And that bag filled with gold coins... is that...”

“Yep. It’s socks.”

A white bag overflowing with fake gold coins was, on closer inspection, a long pair of saggy socks.

“And those golden high boots...”

“Apparently they’re socks, not boots. Though you can’t actually wear them.”

Those socks were the treasure themselves. Soto had made them out of paper-mache, but since they couldn’t be worn, she had muttered “These aren’t socks” after finishing. Still, I’d put the gold coating on them and added them to the vault.

So basically... indeed. The vault was heavily designed by my beloved yet sock-obsessed daughter, Soto. I permitted her to scatter socks within it as long as she promised to never go inside herself. The socks had a subliminal effect which... Okay, nah, they’re just there so Soto can smirk at them while nobody else notices.

“...I guess it’s a bit heartwarming, if I think of this as a work of art our child made?” Rokuko offered.

“Er... I guess?” I replied, also unsure. “Anyway, I’m hungry. Let’s go to the Restaurant of Gluttony.”

“It is about dinnertime.”

We decided to go eat dinner. Where? The Restaurant of Gluttony—a restaurant at the edge of the storage area. There wasn’t a sign or anything, but if you opened the door you would find two tables with

four chairs each, and a counter with four more seats, for a total of twelve. The store was run by a Golem. It was set as a Safe Zone and everything, so you could rest easy. All in all, it was similar to the store that was in that former dungeon within the Holy Kingdom.

It was a free restaurant that served free food prepared by a Golem Chef trained by Kinue. The price was the time you spent waiting for it. The food would start being cooked from scratch, and only if you remained in your seat for two hours would it be completed. It was free if you waited, basically.

And right now, there were two adventurers sitting across from each other at one of the tables eating. It was Gozou and Roppe, the adventurer representatives of Goren.

“Hey, Gozou. Fancy meeting you here.”

“Huh? Well if ain’t Mr. Keima.”

“And Rokuko, too. On a date, I wonder?”

“Yer bein’ stupid, Roppe, no one’d go on a date down here... ’Cept Keima, I guess. Ne’er mind.”

Gozou wiped up the soup with naan-esque bread in his bowl and finished it off while replying to me. Seemed like they were just about done. Naturally, not even they were ballsy enough to chug alcohol in a dungeon.

“Astute as ever, Gozou, Roppe,” Rokuko said. “Are you two on a date, too?”

“Yer kidding. We’re here on work. Eatin’ here’s good for gettin’ some rest in.”

“Yup yup. The time just flies by when we sit here and chat, y’know?” Roppe raised her bowl and chugged down the remaining soup. “Phew, that hits the spot! Alright, Gozou, let’s get outta here.”

“Yup! Today’s the day we’re gonna crack that vault open!”

I was wondering why they were here instead of hunting Iron Golems in the labyrinth, but well... I guess they’d gotten stuck in the trap. It sure was popular.

“See ye later, Keima.”

“You too, Rokuko.”

Gozou and Roppe thus left the Restaurant of Gluttony.

“Now, since the other visitors have left... What do you want to eat?”

“Hmm. Since we’re here, I kinda want to eat whatever the Golem makes.”

“That’ll take a lot of time, y’know.”

“So what? Let’s talk.”

Apparently she planned to reenact what she just heard Roppe talking about. To be fair, though, that was what you were supposed to do, anyway—you needed to wait here for the food to be made if you

wanted to get to the coliseum area normally. I was planning to use Rokuko's place function to skip it, but...

"...Sure, I guess. I can make some snacks if the hunger's too much during the wait."

"Okay, let's split a melon roll."

"Sure."

I produced a melon roll. We nibbled on it while waiting for the Golem chef to finish.

We talked about random stuff for two hours while listening to the chopping and cooking of food.

There was all the stuff that had happened to the town lately... Babies being born and Haku invading Core 10's dungeon. We talked about when we had learned about the traitor faction's true nature. The Holy Kingdom stuff, of course. Daide, Soto, the Demon Realm... By the time we were talking about when I was summoned to the dungeon in the first place, our food was being set on the table.

"Oh, it's here."

"Yup. Let's eat."

Saltiness wafted off the food. It smelled of tantalizing spice. It was vegetable soup with rabbit meat (and a side of naan), designed by Kinue. The idea had initially been to let people have a menu to choose from, but preparing the ingredients and motions had been annoying, so I'd given up. Though Kinue had apparently taught them to make a whole menu, just in case.

"There sure are a lot of solids in this."

"We can use as much as we want since it all comes from spawners."

We got fresh carrots, potatoes, onions, broccoli, and tomatoes from a produce spawner. We also had plenty of fresh rabbit meat from a rabbit spawner. The spices were from an herb spawner, and so it even tasted great. As for salt... Well, we had a mountain of the stuff due to using the boss spawner once with Salt Golems. When we needed more, I could just make more Salt Golems and get a mountain of the stuff again. Really, one option would be to sell the stuff once a year.

Thus, putting aside the initial costs, the Golem chef got ingredients at no cost and used an oven and burner made out of dungeon traps alongside a water generator in order to cook with no energy cost. Thanks to dungeon functions, there wasn't even a need for ventilation.

With this system, going hungry is basically impossible.

"But if you stand up from your seat or leave it tosses the food, right? That feels like a waste."

"It's fine, we use it for Slime food."

“Oh, I see.”

Not to mention, the Golem made six servings per go. If there were fewer customers than that, the remainder would be thrown away. Right into the trash, right as they watched. This was the Restaurant of Gluttony, so yeah, right out it went. Gluttony.

However, the trash can was bottomless, which led to a room below with a Slime. All waste and old ingredients went down there, too. The Slime was the kind that split when they grew too much, and said splits could be reused for other purposes later. One could say the Restaurant of Gluttony’s real gimmick was the fact the Slime got to be a total glutton.

“This bread is super tasty. It’s kind of got, like, a squish to it.”

“Yeah, that’s naan. It goes good with curry, and thanks to its speedy fermenting time it can be made pretty fast.”

“Oh? You want it to go fast, even though the idea here is to waste time?”

“In emergencies they make the fluffy bread with natural yeast from the inn, but normally there’s no need for that,” I replied. We could manually change between them on the backend.

“Well, this bread is good too, so whatever works,” Rokuko said, ripping off some naan and popping it in her mouth.

We wiped our bowls with the naan and finished eating. There were no other customers; it was just Rokuko and me.

“So, what was the next thing to do again?”

“Right. ‘Thanks for the meal.’ You need to say it, too, Rokuko.”

“Okey-dokey. Thanks for the meal,” she said, also to the Golem chef, who proceeded to pull a lever. A thunk sounded beneath our feet, and then the entire restaurant floor began moving downward.

“Ooo! This feels kinda funny,” Rokuko said.

“It’s basically an elevator, so yeah.”

The condition for this to happen was obviously for all the customers to completely clean their plates, then say “thanks for the meal” without standing up. This gimmick would allow a maximum of twelve people to move down at once. However, if you had more than six people, it’d take twice as long and you’d need to wait for the second serving to be finished. Not to mention that anyone standing would instantly reset the process.

“Here come the Slimes.”

The slimes waiting in the lower room stretched out their arms(?) and waved at us.

“There sure are a lot of them,” Rokuko observed.

“Yeah. We feed them even if there’re no customers that day.” That, too, was part of the Restaurant of Gluttony’s gimmick.

“Anyway, last up is the Door of Pride.”

We stood up and walked down the path to the coliseum area. There, a crowd of Golems watched as we passed the midboss Iron Haniwa Golem and went further into the area.

The Door of Pride was right in front of the door to the Boss Room. We passed some bends in the hallways and found a pitch-black, ornately smelted two-leaf door.

“There it is!” Rokuko took my hand and dashed forward.

The Door of Pride. It was a thick two-leaf door made of pig iron and spanning four meters wide, built into a brick wall. The decoration on the door displayed various Beddhist myths. It was a design befitting Rei, the High Priestess of Beddism. There was a keyhole, and it truly did feel as if it could be opened.

“A door this big sure gives off a lot of pressure, huh? My neck hurts just looking up at it,” Rokuko said.

“When I made it, I rested it on the floor at first. It was rough even with {Create Golem}.”

First I’d made a normal ol’ big door, then had Rei design the engravings, which I’d put on top. That part was easy, since I just had to shave it down, but the hard part was rejecting Rei when she kept asking for the gods to look like me and the goddesses to look like Rokuko. To be fair, though, I did have the statue extending out of the top of the door look like Sototemporarily the Goddess of Time.

“Oh, it is Soto. That explains why she’s holding a sock,” Rokuko said.

“She barged in while I was working and demanded I have her biting down on a sock, but I turned her down.”

“Wise.”

There was apparently a religious legend that Sototemporarily the Goddess of Time desired socks as an offering, and would open the path forward if such an offering was made.

“Hm? Wait, does that mean this door actually opens if you offer socks?” Rokuko asked.

“Not normal ones, but I did include a mechanic to get the door open.”

Indeed. The original idea for the gimmick was for the door to never open, with attempting to go beyond it being the pride in the name itself, but... I decided midway through making it to go ahead and have it block the way to a Dummy Core room. And while it’s impossibly difficult, I did include a gimmick for opening it. After all, if there was no way to do so, I couldn’t use the castling function with the Core behind it.

“...How do you open it? Oh, do you use a sock from the Vault of Envy? I don’t see how any of them would fit in the keyhole, though.”

Yeah, I didn’t expect that Vault to ever be broken into, so I

couldn't use anything from it. The key is one of the blades from the Trap of Greed. There were multiple greed traps in the labyrinth. You had to bring a specific Magic Blade from one and jam it hilt-deep into the keyhole. The correct Magic Blade would open the door. The wrong one would just get sucked in and disappear.

"I see, I see... But wait, isn't the whole idea that you can't take Magic Blades out the greed traps?"

"I added a gimmick there, too. If you bring a Magic Blade from the storage area here and put it halfway into the keyhole, it turns into a Magic Blade that can be exchanged for one of the greed trap Magic Blades."

So in short, opening this door took a full backtrack through the dungeon. You had to get a Magic Blade in the storage room and then reach the Door of Pride to stick the blade halfway in. Once you had your blade-shaped exchange ticket, you had to double back all the way to the labyrinth area and exchange the blade for one from a greed trap. You then had your blade-shaped raffle ticket which you had to bring all the way down to the Door of Pride again to roll the dice. If you won, the door unlocked. If you didn't, you lost the blade. From there, you would have to start from the beginning.

The door was also linked to the greed traps such that only the latest one exchanged would work; you couldn't try multiple at once. And since the Restaurant of Gluttony was in the middle of this round trip journey, it would take several hours per attempt, buying even more time.

The Dummy Core's room and the door itself were coated with orichalcum on the inside, making them absurdly sturdy. There was basically no chance of them being destroyed from the outside.

"Wait, so where's the hint for all of that?"

"The engravings on the door are technically a hint, but nobody without intimate knowledge of Beddhist myths would understand them, so they'd need to be someone who'd spent a lot of time studying in the Beddhist church."

The gimmick was possibly too arbitrary for anyone to come up on their own, but it was close enough to feasible that the dungeon system accepted it as valid. It probably helped that the answer was in the Beddhist church, which was within dungeon territory.

"Oh gosh, this is such a strong defense... So sturdy, so strong... Eep, eep, I'm blushing, aren't I?"

"Hm? Er, yeah, you're bright red."

On closer examination, she was hiding her face and ears with her hands out of embarrassment. Unfortunately for her, there were gaps that revealed apple-red between them.

"W-Well, I can't help it! You made such a strong, thorough

gimmick to protect me!” Rokuko basically yelled.

Ah, right, I get it. Apparently this landed a critical hit on the... uh... fetish that dungeons have. Not that I don't entirely understand. Strong defenses are basically saying, "I want to protect you," so... It wasn't really my intention, but it's not as if I didn't feel that way.

“Keima... Um, sooo... You know?” Rokuko looked my way, fidgeting with her toes turned inward. She was crossing and uncrossing her fingers, as if she didn't know where to place them; she was uneasy.

She stared up at me silently with puppy-dog eyes, as if hoping for something. As for what that something was... Well, of course, I knew. I also knew that Haku's spies were gone, and we were so deep in the dungeon that nothing could interrupt us.

I resolved myself and looked at Rokuko head-on. Her blue eyes were a bit moist. Her eyelashes were long. Her cheeks were red. Her lips were plump.

“...Keima, there's nowhere left for you to run.”

“You sure are good at cornering people, huh? Even though you're a dungeon.”

“Maybe instead of 'cornering,' you should say 'pinning down' or something.”

“Good point,” I said... then placed my lips on Rokuko's. So close that her face was split in left and right halves for me. I felt her soft lips. I quickly felt a surge of embarrassment that made me wish I'd shut my eyes, but before I could react, I felt my lips getting licked. I jerked in surprise and jumped back; having a sensitive area licked out of nowhere like that caught me completely off guard.

“R-Rokuko?! Did you just lick me?!”

“...Why are you acting so surprised? It's just a lick.”

“I mean, you... What can I say? I feel like there's steps one has to take here.”

“And I did take a step. We're using our mouths, what's weird about licking? I mean... Do you understand how hard and long I've been holding myself back? I want you so much I could kill, you know,” Rokuko said, cackling to herself while inching closer until this time she brought her face to mine. Smooch. “Come ooon... Don't you want to kiss me? I mean, surely not, since you're so red.”

“I mean... If I had to pick one or the other, it'd be yes, I want to. I do... er, I mean, I do, I love you too, Rokuko.” Despite feeling a bit awkward, I made sure to say it outright.

“Mhm, I know. I'm glad you put it into words like that.”

“Also, uh, is it just me, or are you way too used to kissing?!”



“I mean, obviously? I promised Haku to kiss her one hundred times to kiss you once, and in the past Haku kissed me when giving DP. Unlike you, Mr. Passive, I have lots of experience.”

Oh yeah, that was a thing. They did use their tongues for that.

“Keima, I love you. I love you with all my heart. You belong to me, and I’m never letting you go, okay?”

“Then I better get all the Divine Bedding gathered and used soon. The next one of Haku’s subordinates to come will have the rest, so I can just put them together and use them.”

That would apparently make me immortal and let me be as lazy as I wanted. To think the day would come that I would attain immortality, one of humanity’s greatest ambitions, all to be lazy with the girl I loved...

“Mm. Then let’s kiss to make up for all the times I had to hold back, okay? You have to, too.”

“Er, well, uh... okay?”

And so we did.

“Alright, let’s go home,” I said, opening the menu, only for Rokuko to grin.

“Keima, don’t you think we’re missing something?”

“Hm? Nah, pretty sure we went through all the newly made gimmicks.”

Rokuko wagged a finger. “Tsk tsk tsk. Keima, try remembering all the places we visited.”

“Hmm? Let’s see... The Trap of Greed, the Inn of Greed, the Mini Maze of Wrath, the Vault of Envy, the Restaurant of Gluttony, and the Door of Pride, I think.”

“Isn’t the Inn of Greed really more like an Inn of Sloth?”

“Sloth? Yeah, I guess. You get items just for chilling in bed, so sure.”

“So we pretty much have greed, sloth, wrath, envy, gluttony, and pride... But don’t you think we’re missing something?” Rokuko grinned. Whatever could she be referring to?

“I saw it in a book, but if we added just one more, we’d have the seven deadly sins, wouldn’t we? Wouldn’t weee?”

Ngh! She figured out I’m self-conscious about it!

“...Is there something you want to say, Rokuko?”

“Keima. There’s actually a *lust* gimmick already.”

Say... what...?

Neruneh certainly had suggested a gimmick based around lust, but I was pretty sure I had rejected it. And I didn’t see any new gimmicks like it on the map.

“We had it made in the neighboring [Flame Caverns] so you wouldn’t find it!”

“WHAAAT?!”

In the next instant, I was placed in front of the door leading to the [Flame Caverns]. Beside me stood a victorious, smug-looking Rokuko.

“Are you stupid?! Why did you wrap the [Flame Caverns] up in this?! And with lust of all things, too!”

“Hmph. All I had to do was give Redra the [Succubus Dew] and she was more than happy to help.”

Succubus Dew. As the name implied, it was a Succubus’s bodily fluids, which served as an aphrodisiac. Surely Ittetsu and Redra didn’t need something like that considering what good terms they were on, right...?

“Okay, onwards, to the Sauna of Lust!”

“Isn’t that name a little too on the nose?!”

“Redra said this would help pump visitors up!”

With Rokuko pulling on me, I could hardly refuse, and was thus dragged into the [Flame Caverns]. *I just can’t fight back. Am I finally going to cross the final line with Rokuko? I mean, we already have a daughter, but still.*

“We’re here! This is the [Sauna of Lust]—guuuuh.”

“Oof.”

We couldn’t help but grunt.

Reason being, the sauna was a nightmare hellscape of bright-red walls of roaring flames. There were different colors exploiting heat breakpoints to decorate the walls and ceiling with different colors of fire, and in the corner of the room ran a flowing river of lava.

Er, I mean... If a Salamander and Red Dragon ruling a flame-type dungeon would call something a sauna, I supposed it’d need to be like this...

“Keima, are you okay? I’m fine since Redra gave me her fire protection and all, but I don’t know about you.”

“Oh, you got the protection too? Yeah, me too. Pretty sure I’d be dead on my feet otherwise.”

I thought back to when Redra first gave me her protection. Thanks to that, heat that would boil the majority of life forms alive just felt like a hot summer day.

“This might as well be a trap that kills people with a heat wave once they open the door. And also, you got her protection too?”

“Uh-huh. So she wouldn’t accidentally kill me. She spits fire out when she laughs.”

That was a pretty deadly sounding reason. Although it was nice to have friends you could safely laugh with.

“...Mm, this isn’t really what I was hoping for,” Rokuko said.

“Er, but hey. The fire looks pretty nice, doesn’t it? Lots of pretty colors. Illumination!” I said, trying to cheer Rokuko up.

“I’m not sure what you mean by illumination, but it is pretty.”

I wasn’t really sure if I had successfully cheered her up, but in any case, we went back to our dungeon.

We met Redra on the way back. “I was watching to make sure nobody came, but wow!!! Humans sure are fast!!!” she exclaimed with a grin, but we ignored her.

Chapter 2

Haku's subordinate Dolce came to Goren. Her objective this time was just to relax rather than be a spy or bodyguard.

However, she did have one job.

"Rokuko, I have brought the Divine Mattress. Please accept it," Dolce said respectfully. She then held the mattress (which was Japanese-style and therefore light) up above her head in offering. The divine aura radiating off it left no mistake that this was a piece of the Divine Bedding. Technically she was just *lending* it to us, but in practice we could do anything we wanted thanks to our promise.

The mattress's effect was, on top of the universal regeneration all of the Divine Bedding had, the ability to fly through the air while sleeping à la flying carpet.

I think the idea was that Father the God of Darkness made the Divine Bedding for the creator god, right? We sure have one lazy creator god if they need their beds to travel for them while they sleep. Now that's a man I can respect.

"Thanks, Dolce. Now Keima is one step closer to immortality."

"Y'know, wasn't this technically supposed to be a reward for me, not you?"

"What's the big deal? It's no different from you accepting it."

Well, I suppose I'm kind of in a servant position here, so accepting the offering would be a bit off. Sure.

"Well, Lady Haku said to give it to Rokuko, so..."

Haku's orders, huh? Can't say I'm surprised.

"Welllll, my job is done, so I'm going to go enjoy some time oooff..." Dolce said, phasing through the door to the room. That was a very Wraithlike way to leave. Apparently she planned to chill in the church's basement and eat the cursed energy down there.

"Oh, I almost forgot," Dolce said, sticking her head through the door. "I need to talk to Ichika about the imperial rat races, so send her my way when you can..."

"Hm? If it's for work, I could call her right away."

"I'm sleepy, sooo... preferably this evening, or tonight if possible... Umm, oyasuminasai, as they say?"

"Well, rest's definitely more important. Oyasuminasai."

Dolce was a Wraith. Only made sense that she was a night owl. I would tell Ichika to go talk to Dolce later tonight, then sleep myself.

So for now... Let's try out this mattress. Seems like flying around while sleeping would be fun.

"Keima, it looked like Dolce didn't notice we had been on a date."

"Yep. That's a relief."

"Well, anyway, it's not like you'd be killed even if they did find out. And if you were, you would revive with {Ultra Transformation}, so."

I feel like optimism doesn't mix well with being confident in someone dying?

"Also, I'm pretty sure they would just stab me to death while I'm vulnerable right after the resurrection."

"They obviously wouldn't do that over just a single date," Rouko said, pressing a hand on her brow and shaking her head. "I mean, listen, Keima. If Haku killed you, I would hate her, right?"

"Yeah...? I mean, I imagine so. Sure."

"So do you think Haku would kill you? Knowing that?"

"You have a point..."

Now that she mentioned it, if Haku couldn't do anything that would make Rokuko hate her, then killing me was something she needed to avoid more than anything. It felt a bit cocky to say so myself, but Rokuko did in fact love me, so...

"That said, surely there's no reason to go out of our way to anger her. I'm not interested in stepping on any Dragon tails."

"Dragon tails, hm... I stepped on Redra's tail before, but she didn't get mad. They're not so weak that a human stepping on them would hurt much."

Isekai idioms, not holding up to reality... And I went out of my way to learn them, too.

"Well, putting tails aside, I don't want them angry. Let sleeping dogs lie, how about that?"

"If it means getting you to touch me, I'd push every dog I see awake."

"...You want me to touch you that much?"

"Mhm," Rokuko replied instantly, her ears red.

"At least wait until Dolce goes home. Alright?"

"Fiiine. We can go on another date when she does, then."

"I-If you insist. Going on two dungeon dates in a row would be a bit much, so how about Tsia next time?"

And so our next date was planned. *Ngh, I can't resist...! At least it's happening after Dolce's time off ends.*

Ichika's Perspective

That night, beneath the church, Ichika came to see Dolce. She was

there on Keima's orders, so there was no problem with anyone seeing her. She casually greeted the Succubus nuns she passed on her way to the basement. Dolce was in one of the open jail cells.

"There you are. For you," Dolce said, not a bit of sleepiness in her eyes. She handed an envelope to Ichika, who accepted it. The seal was that of the Ivory Goddess—so to say, it was a job from Haku.

"So, what is it this time?"

"I advise you read it and find out immediately."

"The heck? Must be somethin' pretty real deal." Ichika took the letter out of the envelope, and read it. The details made her recoil a bit and her eyes widened. "Is this for real? Like, for *real* reals?"

"Indeed. It is your duty, Ichika."

"For reaaal?" Ichika scratched her head. "Why this? It's so sudden."

"Who can say? It is not our duty to know that."

"It's about my feelings, y'know? C'mon. Maybe you're all good since you're a monster, but I'm, like, a human. I wanna sleep at night, girl."

"A human? You are a tool. Have you lived here so long you forgot that, perhaps?"

"Aaah, well, you got a point. Guess I am. Peacetime brings dumbtimes, as they say." Ichika furrowed her brows and sighed. "Do I really gotta do this?"

"Yes. It is your duty, Ichika," Dolce replied, leaving no room for protest. The sleepy, lazy attitude Dolce had shown Keima was nowhere to be seen; before Ichika stood only the expressionless director of the Laverio Empire Assassination Division—Haku's subordinate, and a member of her four chief underlings.

"What're the chances she takes it back later and I bungle something up by doing this?"

"She says she doesn't mind and you will not be punished. It needs to be done."

"So she's for real, huh...?"

"That is what I have been saying. Now... Sorin. Your reply?"

Ichika clicked her tongue. Seemed like saying no wasn't an option.

"...Roger," she finally said. Dolce smiled.

* * *

As I was wrapped up in bed, the door to my room quietly opened, then shut. It must have been Niku. I paid her no mind and kept my eyes closed. However...

"Masteer? Ya sleeping?" came a voice with a Pavella accent. I opened my eyes.

"Ichika...?"

“Oh, you’re awake.”

I rubbed my eyes and looked at her, only to see that Ichika was in her underwear. She had on frilly white panties from the dungeon, plus a garter belt with over-the-knee socks. One could say she was dressed up for the occasion.

“What’re you doing?”

“Er, well. Y’know... I’ve got a tiiny little request for you, so... I told Niku I wanted to be your dakimakura today, and had her switch places with me,” Ichika said, heading to my pillow. “Oh, and Rokuko said okay, too, so nooo worries.”

“Rokuko did? Really?”

“You think I’d lie about that, dude? If you don’t believe me, check with the collar.”

“This is an order. Be honest: did Rokuko give you permission to be my dakimakura?”

“She did. Man, no mercy, huh? I mean, I couldn’t believe it myself, but still.”

Ichika’s collar didn’t constrict. Apparently she was telling the truth. *Well... I guess Rokuko does think of both Niku and Ichika as just slaves, so.*

“S-So, mind if I get on the futon? Kinda embarrassed, but y’know.”

“...Sure? Go ahead.” I lifted up the blanket for Ichika.

“Scuse me, coming in... Whew, it’s filled with your warmth and smell, huh?”

“Feel free to leave if you don’t like it.”

“I obviously love it, duh. I told you before, didn’t I? I wouldn’t bite if it was with you, Master,” Ichika said, hugging me from the side within the pillow. Unlike Niku, she was timid about it, kind of ticklish, and soft all over. I mean, Niku was soft too, a good daki for sure, but Ichika’s chest was, uh, a lot softer.

“Oh? Wearing normal pajamas, huh?”

“Yeah. I feel like if I used the Divine Bedding every day, I would kind of get consumed by them or something.”

“Mmm, that a fact? I love that kind of pointless restraint you have for all sortsa things, Master,” she said, snuggling up against me. Maybe due to her hair being longer than Niku’s, the scent was much stronger despite their supposedly using the same shampoo. There was also the faint scent of curry spice. She must have been eating a curry roll recently.

“Master. Just so we’re, like, clear, you can do whatever you want with me, ’kay? Or... maybe you want me to do whatever I like with you? There’s a lot we can do, so. Remember the other day when Soto made you a girl? Feel totes free to do that here and now.”

“Nah, no way. Being a dakimakura is proud work that doesn’t

involve any of that, alright?”

“Awww, that sucks. You may have noticed, but I came here hoping for that,” Ichika said, lifting up the blanket a bit to reveal her white shoulders and hefty cleavage. I... pulled the blanket back down.

“So cold... I’m going so far for you, and yet...”

“Nah, you’re just being so forward it’s suspicious.” I stealthily took out my Holy Blade Siesta to put Ichika to sleep. Without this, we’d probably be up until morning. “What’s with you? Did Dolce say if you seduced me for some spy business she’d let you eat as many curry rolls as you wanted?”

I carefully unsheathed the blade behind me and set it on my pillow. Now I just had to relax and let Siesta’s sleep waves take us away. Ichika wouldn’t be able to do anything weird if she was asleep.

“Ahaha! You’re a smart cookie, Master... is what I’d like to say, but...” Ichika suddenly embraced me in a tight hug. “Sorry, but I’m for real. I feel bad for Rokuko, but... mnn!”

“Guh?!”

Ichika pressed her soft lips on mine, sucking on my mouth... and then I felt a heat in my back. A jolt of pain shot through me. Liquid filled my throat, forcing me to cough.

“Ngh! Gah, nghaaha...!” I tried to speak, but my lips were blown. I felt something wiggle back and forth in my back, sending white flashes to my brain that surpassed even the sharpest of pain. I tried to push Ichika off, but she wouldn’t budge. What the hell was happening?

“Nn, gulp... fwaah! Master, your blood tastes so goooooood,” Ichika said, licking crimson blood off her lips. That was... my blood? What in the...

“Just go ahead and sleep, ’kay?” Ichika said, smiling a bewitching smile with a bloodied knife in hand. She then swung the knife; my vision spun, and then my head hit something. My mind went dark... and I saw my body without a head. Ah. This is... death...

Rokuko’s Perspective

It was the middle of the night. Warning sirens suddenly began to sound. Rokuko flung off her blanket, jumped up, and immediately checked with Elka, the fairy managing her dungeon.

“What’s going on?!”

“There is an infiltrator in the dungeon, Rokuko!” came the reply through the dungeon voice call.

“There’s always infiltrators! Who is it specifically and what did they do?!”

“D-Dolce destroyed one of the hidden Dummy Cores!”

“Dolce? A Dummy Core?” Rokuko opened the map and checked Dolce’s position. She was in the entrance area right at the start of the dungeon. There was a Dummy Core hidden within one of the pitfalls there.

“Why is Dolce destroying Dummy Cores? Elka, send Goblins to stop her.”

“That won’t work, she’ll kill them instantly!”

This didn’t make any sense. Why would Dolce suddenly start invading the dungeon? And destroying Dummy Cores on top of that?

“What about Keima?! Wake him up!”

“He isn’t responding! He is likely asleep!”

At a time this crucial? In any case, it was an emergency. She had to wake him up. Rokuko dashed out of her room in the chief residence and rushed to Keima’s room.

“Whoa there. Wassup, Rokuko?”

“Ichika. It’s an emergency! Dolce is invading the dungeon!”

“Wait, Dolce? For real? Like, why?”

“I don’t know! It’s an emergency, get Keima up!”

Rokuko passed Ichika on the way and brought her along to Keima’s room. The door was unlocked, so she kicked it down and went inside. Keima was lazily lying in his futon.

“Wake up, Keima! It’s an emergency!”

Rokuko mercilessly grabbed his chest and sat him up, but no matter how hard she shook, Keima just kept snoozing.

“Not looking good, dude. He’s passed right out...”

“Guuuh, what do I doooo... Why is Dolce doing this...”

Rokuko checked the map and saw Dolce destroying a Dummy Core beneath a cobblestone section in the labyrinth area. That was the third one out of those hidden there. Including the one in the entrance area, she had destroyed five already.

“Ngh! Why does she know where they are?!”

“Probably using a magic eye or something? Also, her instincts as a dungeon monster, probs.”

“Right. It does feel like she just so happens to be destroying any Dummy Cores she passes.”

There were a fair number of undestroyed Dummy Cores in areas Dolce left. There were also Cores in areas she hadn’t gone through. Regardless, Dolce passed by the Inn of Greed and flew to the spiral staircase. She ignored the adventurers she passed on the way, and likewise they didn’t notice her, feeling only that a cold wind had blown by. Dolce the Wraith had come to assassinate the dungeon for real. That was the impression one got.

“Guh?! She’s at the storage area already?!”

“Like, she can fly. The stairway’s gimmicks aren’t gonna be

nothing for her.”

Rokuko furrowed her brows. That said, not even a Wraith could pass through the walls and doors of a dungeon they didn't belong to. At this rate, she would be stuck at the Restaurant of Gluttony Rokuko had just visited with Keima.

“Elka! Identify Dolce as an enemy and wake up the monster girls to take her down! Buy time by sending the Haniwa Golems her way! I'll wake Keima up no matter what it takes!”

“Y-Yes, ma'am! They're here already, taking battle positions!”

Thus, Rokuko finally decided to view Dolce as an enemy. She temporarily left dealing with her to her subordinates, and focused on her most important job—waking Keima up.

“Rokuko, girl. Isn't it, like, a thing that sleeping beauties are woken up by a kiss from their one true love?”

“A kiss?!”

Without a moment's hesitation, Rokuko slammed her lips on Keima's and gave a loud kiss. Keima's lips were a bit hard and a bit soft, while the breath from his nose tickled. But unfortunately, Rokuko didn't have the time to enjoy that.

“Fwah! He didn't wake up?!”

“Guess not.”

“Was my love not enough?”

“Nah, girl, it's, like, just a fairy tale, so...”

Rokuko was a bit dissatisfied, but she accepted that.

“Welp, nothing we can do at this point. Rokuko, how about you send me to the Restaurant of Gluttony?”

“Ichika, you think you can beat Dolce?”

“Dunno, but I'm kind of, like, tight with her since I looked after her whenever she was here. If she's gotta wait over there, maybe she'll listen to some negotiating?” Ichika suggested, her expression one of both resignation and resolve. “Not to mention, this thing might even put her to sleep,” she continued, showing a glimpse of Keima's beloved sword Siesta. The black gemstone in its hilt flashed as if trying to say something. It was surely saying, “Leave it to us.”

“Okay. I'll send you over, but I'll call you back the moment it looks dangerous.”

Rokuko elected to put the dungeon's fate in Ichika's hands.

And so, with Rei and the others' efforts proving useless, Dolce arrived at the Restaurant of Gluttony. There were no other adventurers there, in part since it was late at night. Rokuko watched Ichika and Dolce's exchange through the monitor.

“Dolce. Over here, giiirl.”

“Good, you're alive. Your results?”

“Meh. I didn't complete the primary objective, but I did step one.”

Dolce praised Ichika. It seemed that Dolce was indeed willing to talk to her. But... what was that about results? Rokuko watched on, feeling confused.

“That will do. I was not expecting much to begin with.”

“Haha, harsh. Well, that’s just how highly Master thought of me, I guess.”

They were having a conversation, but the details were incomprehensible. What were they talking about...?

“So, this is the gimmick you were speaking about?”

“Yuppers. It won’t let you pass unless you wait two hours. It’s my masterpiece... and since this is an emergency situation, you’ll have to wait five hours to pass.”

“That is rather slow. However, it functions as a gimmick because anyone can pass.”

“You got it. So, what’s the plan? The food here’s totes delish, and you know if I’m saying that it’s legit.”

“I will not be partaking. Let us proceed.”

“Alrighty. Just pull the lever by the Golem this way, then. While sitting.”

“Like this?”

Dolce flicked a finger, using {Poltergeist} to move the lever. A thunking sound was heard, and the restaurant floor began to descend.

“Ichika?! What are you doing?!”

“Oops. Sorry, girl. Looks like I couldn’t convince her.”

“Oh, is Rokuko watching? My apologies for all this; it’s merely business. We thought of you as our own little sister... but work is work.”

Ichika waved a hand lazily, while Dolce bowed her head diligently. Rokuko fell into a panic; how, why, when?

While she was panicking, Ichika and Dolce defeated the slimes and made their way to the coliseum area. The latter blasted Dummy Cores hidden among the lights while casually defeating the midboss Iron Haniwa Golem. Golems and Wraiths were a bad mix—reason being, the physical attacks of Golems would go right through them, while Wraiths could use their specialty magic to hit their Cores directly.

The two conquered the coliseum area and advanced further. A magnificent door came into view.

“That door is totally a trap. Real boss is that way,” Ichika said, ignoring the Door of Pride and going to the Boss Room. Inside was a Dragon Golem controlled by Rei, but even it had a terrible time with Wraiths.

“...Preeetty sure I don’t wanna be fighting this thing.”

“You may enter my {Storage}. I will retrieve you when it is done.”

“Roger dodger.”

Ichika went into Dolce’s {Storage} without much resistance, and with that the boss fight began. The Dragon Golem’s gimmick was that it would shoot fire via dungeon traps, but the matchup was still just awful. A real Dragon would have been one thing, but a Golem shaped like a Dragon was still a Golem.

Dolce tore it to shreds and moved past the Boss Room, then destroyed the Dummy Core atop the pedestal beyond it. She paused to see if the dungeon would collapse, then withdrew Ichika from {Storage}.

“What’s next, Ichika?”

“Wowzers, that really was fast. There’s a secret path here; the goal’s right up ahead.”

Ichika spilled the beans in an instant and showed her the next Boss Room.

“Aaah! My defensive gimmicks!”

“R-Rokuko, wh-what do we do?” Rei asked tearfully.

“Hide. If we focus on running with the Orichalcum Golem, then —”

“Oh, a miniature Orichalcum Golem, hm? Quite the expensive expenditure,” Dolce said, capturing the Orichalcum Golem as if it was nothing. “The boss itself is not bad, but the one controlling it is inexperienced. Its movements were simple. In any case... Is this the boss, Ichika?”

“Yuppers. It’s pretty tough, though, so to be real, I don’t even know what to do here.”

“It is rather trivial... Observe,” Dolce said, then tossed the Orichalcum Golem out of the room. *Crap! I didn’t think of that!* Rokuko thought, glaring at Dolce through the monitor. One could get through a Boss Room by tossing the boss out of it, even if you didn’t defeat the boss itself.

Dolce and Ichika went farther inside before the Orichalcum Golem could make it back. They destroyed a Dummy Core on the way, and finally reached the deepest area with all its instant-death traps.

“Gah, jeez! They made it that far already?!” Rokuko cried.

“Guh...” There was a groan. Rokuko turned around and saw Keima’s eyes open narrowly.

“Keima, you’re awake?! It’s an emergency!”

“Rokuko... Look out for Ichika. Capture her the moment you see her.”

“What?!”

Rokuko couldn’t believe what she had just heard.

“Guh, I can’t move. What time is it? How much time has passed since Ichika killed me?”

“Ichika killed you? Wait, hold on, what are you talking about?”

“I was revived thanks to {Ultra Transformation}, but there’s no mistaking it. She killed me.”

“You were dead?!” Rokuko cried with shock.

“Yup. She stabbed me in the back and cut off my head,” Keima said. Rokuko sat him up and looked over his body, which immediately led her to noticing a hole in the back of his jersey. She hadn’t seen it before since he had been lying facedown.

“There’s not a scratch on your body, but... Come to think of it, back when you revived last time, not a single drop of blood was left either.”

At the time he had slept a full day until waking up naturally, but this time he had likely gotten up earlier due to all their efforts to wake him up. It might have been even faster had he been using the Divine Bedding, but the fact he didn’t use them regularly had come back to bite them here.

“But that can wait! It’s an emergency! Dolce just beat the dungeon, and, like, she’s destroying Dummy Cores!”

“Dolce is...? This timing can’t be a coincidence. Ichika?”

“She went with Dolce to convince her... Ah, no! She’s part of the plot too, isn’t she?!”

The situation was becoming clearer. Ichika was working with Dolce to take the dungeon down. In the process she sealed off their biggest foe, Keima, and tricked Rokuko to send her deep into the dungeon. If there was one thing she didn’t expect, it was Keima waking up so soon, maybe?

“Sorry, Keima, I know you’re probably still groggy, but I need your help here.”

“...Right.”

Keima put a hand on his neck, which Rokuko then placed hers on top of.

* * *

The monitor showed the farthest-back area. While I was dead, our good friend Dolce—or rather, former friend—had apparently made it as far into the dungeon as one could go. The area was filled with instant-death traps, but Dolce used her nature as a Wraith to pass by them effortlessly—she was already dead, after all. The press room, the room filled with suffocating gas, the water-draining drowning... none fazed her. Really, I couldn’t help but have this feeling that Wraiths were kind of just unfair.

Ichika was hiding inside Dolce’s {Storage} and occasionally popped her head out to give directions.

“Rokuko, can you not withdraw Ichika?”

“I can’t! She’s Dolce’s ‘belongings’ now, so I can’t withdraw her!”

We had only been able to withdraw Ichika by having Rokuko envision her as a slave and our ‘belongings,’ rather than a person. We couldn’t withdraw her once she became someone else’s belonging instead. It was that simple.

“What about you, Keima? Can you not choke her with the collar?”

“Unfortunately, it doesn’t do anything.”

I had been focusing on squeezing the collar each time Ichika popped her head out, but it didn’t do anything. Her directions were clear and concise, and each time she popped her head out Dolce put everything into protecting her, leaving no openings.

“What do we do, Keima?! At this rate, they’ll make it to my Dungeon Core...!”

“For now, we should castle it with the Dummy Core that’s safe behind the Door of Pride.”

“Oh, right! There’s plenty of other safe Dummy Cores, but that one’s the safest,” Rokuko said, sending her Dungeon Core away. There were other safe ones, too, like those in the Tsia mountain tunnel. And once we had calmed down a little from securing a little safety, I had the leeway to notice something.

“...Hm? Isn’t the path she’s going down a bit off from the path to the Dungeon Core?”

“Hm? You’re right... They’re going to the Suzuki Wall?”

Indeed. The Suzuki Wall. This reminded me... Ichika had helped with moving it here. Really, one could say the only thing Ichika knew about this section of the dungeon was the path there.

“Are they after Suzuki? But why? It’s just a DP source.”

“Yeah, it’s just 700 DP a day at most, which is like ten villagers.”

“We don’t even need it at this point... If they wanted it, we could have just given it to them.”

We didn’t know their objective. It was time for Rei’s help.

Ichika’s Perspective

“There’s totally too many Dummy Cores for us to destroy all of them. Especially since there’s a ton I don’t even know about,” Ichika said.

“Indeed. However, I have already gathered enough energy. Now all we need is to steal the Hero as planned,” Dolce said, gripping a black pearl. That pearl could apparently absorb the energy from overflowing Dummy Cores. Ichika had been confused by why Haku was going out of her way to destroy this dungeon’s Cores when she could have made them on her own, but since thinking about that wasn’t Ichika’s job, she didn’t question it.

They arrived at the Suzuki Wall, which as the name implied was the wall where the Hero named Suzuki was imprisoned. It was just a square block of stone in the middle of the room, with no defenses or anything, which probably reflected how little importance they put in it. It was closer to a pillar than a wall.

“Yup. This is it.”

“Interesting. I shall destroy it, then. ■■■■■, ■■■■■, ■■■■■■■■■—{Black Thunder}.” Dolce held the dark pearl above her head, drawing power from it. A crackling sphere of black lightning appeared and then was launched toward the pillar. It exploded. Cracks shot through the wall, and chunks fell apart. Dolce stuck her hand in a central crack and pulled it aside. Suzuki the Hero’s head, which had dyed blonde hair with black roots, flopped forward from the wall. His eyes moved, and he furrowed his brow at the first light he had seen in a long time.

He didn’t move yet, perhaps due to the black lightning, or perhaps due to having been buried for so long. Closer examination revealed that he had stone filling his mouth and even his nose. That certainly explained why he couldn’t move even if he wanted to.

“I see he has stone even within his lungs. I am impressed he has lived for this long,” Dolce said.

“Heroes sure are something else, like, for real,” Ichika agreed. Dolce elected to manually remove the stone in Suzuki’s throat, lungs, and so on herself. She jammed her hand into his mouth, breaking his teeth and ripping his lungs and windpipe to drag the stone out. That would have instantly killed a normal person, but Suzuki’s {Ultra Healing} instantly revived him. Really, that was a simple thing for Suzuki to do after using his skill for years without pausing for even a second.

“Gah, haaah! Haaaaaaaaaah...! A-Am I free?”

“And he is even sane. That must be the power of {Ultra Healing} as well.”

“Yeah... I dunno who you are, but thanks... Seems like you know who I am?” Suzuki asked. Perhaps due to the constant use of {Ultra Healing}, his hair hadn’t grown, and he hadn’t physically developed or deteriorated at all. Now that the stone was gone, he could move freely, and he was enjoying his first stretching in a long time. “Ah, goddamn. How long was I buried in there, anyway? A hundred years? A thousand?”

“Sorry to burst your bubble, dude, but it’s only been a couple years,” Ichika said with a shrug.

“Yo, you remember me?”

“You’re dead!” Suzuki came swinging. Ichika grabbed his arm and easily tossed him over her shoulder.

“Gah! Th-The hell was that?!”

“Dolce, look... Is this guy really gonna be useful?” Ichika asked, stepping on Suzuki’s back to keep him down.

“Could one expect more from a barely trained civilian? He is a Hero, so I’m sure he will get stronger in no time.”

“You sure?”

“In particular, this one used his Hero skill within the wall nonstop... By this point he is surely a Hero highly specialized for using said Hero skill. There will be uses for him,” Dolce said, directing the black pearl at Suzuki. A shining white light shot from the pearl into Suzuki, seeping directly into his body. That must have been the energy from the Dummy Core.

“Huh? What the... {Ultra Healing: Level 2}?! Hahaha, the hell was that?! Either way, guess this’ll help me kill that bastard!”

“Gonna say no shot to that one, champ. You’re, like, way too weak for that.”

“Then give me more! More power!” Suzuki roared, still under Ichika’s foot.

“Oh yes, if you listen to what we say, we will grant you as much power as you want. Ichika, free him.”

“Rogeeer.”

“Tch... Heh, thanks! Now eat shit!”

“Yeah, yeah, saw it coming a mile away, buddy.”

Suzuki tried launching another surprise attack on Ichika once she moved her feet, but as expected she dodged it easily.

“Are you slow or something, dude? That was, like, the same attack as last time.”

“Tch... I-I’m just still not back in shape yet!”

“Incidentally,” Dolce said, “if you remain defiant, we will readily bury you in stone once again.”

Suzuki paled and settled down, lifting both hands in defeat.

“Ngh... A-Alright, you win. I don’t wanna get buried again. So, whaddaya want me to do?”

“Enter my {Storage}.”

“Pretty fuckin’ dark in there...”

“Hurry.”

“A-Alright. I’m going... Tch,” Suzuki said, obediently going into Dolce’s {Storage}. Though fairly hesitantly, maybe due to being afraid of the dark now.

“Heya, Ichika. And Dolce,” came a voice from the entrance. There stood Keima; apparently he had woken up already.

“...You woke up pretty fast, Master. Feel free to go back to bed, just like always,” Ichika said.

“Hey, don’t be so cold. I forced myself awake just for you,” Keima

replied casually. He seemed completely healthy despite having had his heart pierced from behind and dug out before having his head chopped off.

“Ichika, I thought you crippled Keima?”

“I killed the heck out of him, girl. He wasn’t supposed to be able to move a whole day after reviving, though...”

“Yep, she sure killed me. But if you sleep well every day, you’ll have energy when you need it,” Keima said. They observed him carefully while having their violent little chat. He certainly had a lot of leeway despite showing himself like that. Surely he knew Dolce could kill him in an instant if she chose to.

“...An illusion, I suppose?” concluded Dolce. That certainly would explain their attitudes. Keima had leeway since he had no fear of dying, and Dolce didn’t bother killing him since there was no point. It was that simple.

“Yup, my body’s not here. I’m holding back my urge to sleep... But what can I say, I wanted to talk face-to-face first. Though I’m actually looking through the monitor,” Keima said. He inhaled once, then glared at Dolce. “What’s your objective? Why attack us after all this time?”

“Who can say? I know nothing but the fact it is Lady Haku’s orders,” Dolce said, bowing her head.

“You put Suzuki in your {Storage}. We would have sold him to you all for basically nothing; why go for a violent approach?”

“Who can say? I did not want to do so myself, but orders are orders,” Dolce said, shrugging. Even in Ichika’s eyes, it was clear she didn’t know the reason why. In the first place... Dolce was Haku’s monster. The orders she was given didn’t need reasons—even if on a personal level, she was *a bit* unhappy about the specifics.

“That kills any room for negotiation, but I guess it’s your philosophy, huh?”

“Indeed. Despite how it may seem, I do my job well.”

“Yeah, I can tell from your tone that you’re in work mode. Hm... Not sure if I should use you as a good example for my own monster girls, or a bad example.”

“Feel free to use me as either,” Dolce said, bowing her head again. She wore the bright smile of one who did not feel they were doing something shameful whatsoever.

* * *

Having gone out of my way to appear before them as an illusion, I decided to take my shot and ask some questions. “By the way, why doesn’t your collar work, Ichika? I’ve been trying to activate it, but... distance doesn’t matter, right?”

“Welp... Sorry, dude. Haku has final authority over these collars.”

“Haku does...?”

“Didn’t you know? They all come from the [Ivory Slave] dungeon.”

A dungeon name starting with Ivory... In other words, Haku could freely control all slave collars to begin with. “Though to be totally clear and all, I’m, like, Haku’s real-deal servant.”

“...She bought you?”

“Nah, I mean, you. Like, real talk, don’t you think it’s weird you bought a top-class former adventurer like me for only fifty silvers? I mean, maybe you didn’t at first, but I should’ve been like, ten golds at the very least.”

Now that she mentioned it, that *was* really weird. Ichika was top-class. She knew everything about the world when I didn’t, was a fairly good fighter, could read and write, was able to do simple math, and on top of that she had the negotiation skills necessary to work as a receptionist, the courage to not back down to Heroes, and the cold and calculating mind necessary to hunt for information while being beaten. She could’ve paid back fifty silvers whether she was a slave or not, and even the High Priestess was willing to pay ten thousand golds for her.

Though... Ichika never was in debt, was she?

“You were a piece Haku put on the board to begin with, then.”

“Yuppers. You should remember just who owns the guild that recommended the slaver selling me. My support was totes perfect, wasn’t it?”

Indeed. The Adventurer’s Guild had been made by Haku to begin with. It would have been easy for her to introduce a slave trader under her control to me.

“And if I didn’t try to buy a slave?”

“Ahahaha, pretty sure the guild woulda hardcore shilled owning a real-deal slave. Oh, and don’t say you might’ve chosen someone else, ’kay? I mean, I was a super cheap specialty with a history. A clever spender who beat Lady Haku with just 100,000 DP wouldn’t have passed me, ever... isn’t that right, Master?”

“Ngh...! You have a point...!”

It turned out that, even before buying Ichika... we were dancing on the palm of Haku’s hand.

“All that said, I served you for real, Master. I mean, if not for this wacko order, I would’ve served you forever and ever, no prob.”

“...I don’t doubt that in the least, but you might as well say I bought you out with curry rolls.”

“Y’know, my job was supposed to be just reporting to Haku whether you’re a man fit for Rokuko, Master.”

“Then why are you doing this?”

“That’s what I wanna ask Lady Haku. Outta nowhere, she told me to ‘kill him without fail.’” Ichika shrugged.

“Seems like you’re planning to leave here with me alive, though.”

“I mean, not like she told me to kill you TWICE without fail. Isn’t that right, Dolce?”

“Indeed. She certainly did not. Thus... if you know your place and hide, we will overlook you. Attempt anything and we will not be so generous next time, however.”

“That’s how grateful I am to you, Master, like, for real. You let me eat lots of tasty stuff, just like you promised.”

Apparently she was grateful enough that she was willing to ignore the spirit of her orders and use a loophole to help me out. In other words... I was alive purely by their goodwill. And since we were dealing with Haku, she would probably notice that I was alive in no time. I wouldn’t get another chance.

“It is about time we leave, Ichika. Destroying the dungeon seems difficult, so we will depart for now.”

“Whoops! Guess that’s it, Master... Bye bye. See you later?”

“You think we’ll meet again?”

“Who knows? But you’re best off running if you don’t wanna die. Oh, and by the way...” Ichika opened her {Storage} and gave me a glimpse of my main blade, Siesta. “Gonna take this as a severance payment.”

“What the hell?! Give that back, Ichika! Come on! THIEF!”

“Eh, you know how it is: subversive activities, weaken from the inside, all that good stuff. Later!” Ichika said, jumping into Dolce’s {Storage}. Dolce then closed her {Storage} and bowed to me again.

“Now then, I have completed my objective, and will be taking my leave as well... In the depth of my mind are memories of distant lands once traveled, forming a mental path from here to there. Fly through space, fly through time. There becomes here and here becomes there. Fuse, conjoin, connect... {Teleport}.”

Thus, Dolce {Teleported} away. I... elected not to stop her. I didn’t have the information or tools to take her down at the moment. It hit me that all the traps I had prepared had been just for humans.

They had taken Suzuki, and the Dungeon was smashed to bits. But this wasn’t unrecoverable. The problem was... elsewhere.

“Well, well... There certainly is a lot that doesn’t make sense about this, huh?”

There were a lot of things about this that I just couldn’t accept. I needed to talk to Rokuko and the others about it all, including Ichika’s betrayal.

Naturally, staying awake at that point was painful, so I left the cleanup to Rokuko and slept for a bit. When I woke up, I held a dungeon meeting in the Master Room. I had used the Divine Blanket, so I was in peak shape.

Participating were me, Rokuko, Niku, Soto, and the three monster girls, for seven members total. The seat where Ichika should have been was left empty.

“Let’s put the situation together. First of all, Ichika’s betrayed us,” I said. Everyone already knew that, but I announced it anyway to formalize it. She’d even stolen my Siesta. Fuck, fuuuck...!

“To think she would stab you, Master... I should not have given up my dakimakura duty. I’m sorry,” Niku said, tail hanging sadly behind her, wedged between her legs.

“I can’t believe instructor Ichika betrayed us! I’ll have some harsh words for her the next time we meet!” Rei declared, her heart having seemingly not caught up to reality yet.

“She said she was going to splurge, and used every bit of DP she had to buy curry rolls... I should have known something was off,” Kinue said, having apparently provided the curry rolls. Ichika sure was a glutton...

“Aaah, I always expected she would do something like thiiiis,” Neruneh said, sounding like the neighbor of a shooter giving an interview after the fact.

“Ichika’s socks now come at a premium, huh!”

“Soto, that’s not the problem,” Rokuko prodded.

“Oh. Rokuko, what shall we do about Ichika’s shift in the inn?” Kinue asked.

“Hm, we could have Soto’s Silky start helping out? I want to keep the inn working as smoothly as possible so nobody thinks a Paradigm Shift in the dungeon is happening; that would be way too much for Keima right now.”

“Oh, it’s fine. I will have a replacement ready.”

... *Why is it that nobody’s moved? I was pretty shocked myself.*

“So, what next, Keima?” Rokuko asked. “Run, like Ichika suggested?”

“For now, we don’t even know enough to make an informed decision on whether... Hm? What’s up, Niku?” I asked. She was raising her hand.

“Master. I have a request. Before we continue, please replace my collar.”

Oh yeah. We had learned slave collars were one of Haku’s tricks. In which case... Considering the risk of her listening on, it would be

best to replace it before having this meeting.

"We should probably not have her wear a collar at all, then?" Rokuko suggested. "Niku is Soto's Dungeon Master, first of all, so unlike Ichika she won't betray us."

"No. Absolutely not. Never," Niku said, shaking her head. As a dog, collars apparently held a lot of meaning.

"Hm. A fake collar is definitely a good idea," Rokuko said. "We might be able to fake them out for a second if they try doing something with it. They'll find out immediately, but no harm doing it anyway."

"Right. Rokuko is a genius. Momentary pauses in a battle can mean life or death," Niku said, nodding firmly. Well, if they insisted... Wait.

"Won't you, like, die if we take the collar off on our own?"

"If you do it, Master, it will be fine."

"Are you sure about that? You won't die?"

"If I die, revive me."

"Nah, no way, you're not a dungeon monster."

Why was Niku always so extreme?

"Also, Ichika said it would be okay, so it will be okay."

Ichika just betrayed us, y'know? I mean... she did serve faithfully until ordered to do otherwise, so it's probably true, but still.

Despite feeling a bit off, I elected to replace the collar.

"Oh, and please make it by hand," Niku added.

"Er, sure."

I bought leather and such from the DP catalog, then quickly made it with {Create Golem}. It felt more or less the same since it would squeeze if I focused on it, too, so I gave it to Niku, who wagged her tail happily as she put it on. Well, at least it didn't kill her.

Once the collar was exchanged, the meeting resumed.

"Okay, back on track. What's next, Keima?" Rokuko asked.

"First of all, we need to get what we know in order. It's less that Ichika betrayed us, and more that she was always Haku's subordinate, and Dolce worked with her to attack us. Apparently on Haku's orders," I said. That made us and Haku enemies.

"Keima. Do you really think my sister would attack me like this? I'm pretty sure Dolce is being tricked or something," Rokuko said.

"Hm... Yeah, a lot of things definitely feel off about this. Like why would she attack us now, after all this time, and why steal Suzuki?"

As far as I knew, there was absolutely no reason for Haku to attack us. At most, she wanted to avoid paying us, but that obviously wasn't a good enough reason. Not to be arrogant or anything, but we were too valuable as tools for her to just throw us away like that, when we already took basically any job she gave us.

“And furthermore, why am I even alive?”

“What? You died, Keima.”

“Once,” I replied. Rokuko tilted her head.

Ichika certainly had killed me once. I was saved since Ichika and Dolce decided to bend the rules, but...

“Haku knows I can revive once with {Ultra Transformation}, remember?”

She said she had learned about {Ultra Transformation} from another Hero that had the skill. Surely she knew about the revival aspect, then.

“Sure, but so what? You lived since Ichika and Dolce spared you, right?”

“Haku would have given orders to stop that from happening,” I replied. If she really wanted me dead, she would have ordered them to not let me revive, in clear terms.

“True. It would be weird for Haku to make such a big tactical error.”

“Plus, the timing for this attack doesn’t make any sense. Why have Ichika betray us now of all times? It would have been way more effective for her to betray us at a really crucial time, like in the middle of a Dungeon Battle.”

“That’s certainly true... It’s kind of, like, half-baked.”

“And so is their destruction of Dummy Cores. It’s highly likely they only broke the ones Ichika knew about, and the ones on the way to Suzuki, but...” Even with that in mind, there were many Dummy Cores Ichika surely knew about that they hadn’t broken. Maybe she forgot to tell her—and to be fair, I didn’t remember all of the ones I had hidden, either.

“In which case, maybe Dolce really is being tricked?”

“It’s a bit hard to believe Dolce would be tricked when she was head of intelligence, but it’s certainly a strong possibility. But it doesn’t feel quite right, either. It feels more like—rather than Dolce being tricked, something has gone wrong with Haku.”

“Haku? Mmm, let me ask by mail... Ooh, wait, I guess it would be weird to ask her that directly?” Rokuko asked, hand in the air, halfway to starting a text.

I shook my head. “Nah. It’ll actually be better to write a mail complaining about this. Her response might tell us something, and if she doesn’t we’ll know we need to go to the imperial capital directly to investigate.”

“True, true.”

Mails were a direct hotline to Haku. If someone was interfering she could reveal that and we would know it for sure, and if she didn’t, she was the culprit herself. We’d benefit from knowing either way.

Though to be safe, we hid the fact I was still alive.

“No point sitting around waiting for a reply. Want to prepare monsters for infiltrating the imperial capital ahead of time? If nothing’s wrong, we can just have them do the work we were going to do there anyway.”

“Oh, that’s a good idea,” I replied, opening the catalog.

That was when I noticed things were weird.

“Uh, what’s going on? My catalog’s smeared black all over.”

“Um... Wow, what? No way. What’s going on?”

I opened the catalog through the dungeon menu, but the pages were pure black. I hadn’t noticed when making Niku’s collar, but the monster pages were all black, and the monitor looked like a blank CRT that’d had its power cut off.

“I guess even the gacha is blocked off,” Rokuko said. “The heck is going on?”

“Materials and treasure works, but... Seriously, what the heck?”

And then, I remembered something—the black pearl Dolce was using. Was that maybe something related to Dungeon Eaters? Maybe Dolce went around breaking Dummy Cores to make this happen. It was possible.

“Wonder if Dolce did this,” I said.

“Hrm, hrm, hrm. But how would she have done it?”

The smeared-over monster pages were also inaccessible to the monster girls. Though that was hardly worth commenting on, considering the Dungeon Master and Core couldn’t access them to begin with.

“Rokuko, perhaps something has been injected into Master’s body,” Rei said. Oh yeah; it could have been Ichika’s work, too.

“Um, what will we do if that’s actually true?” Rokuko asked. “Don’t tell me we need to cut Keima’s body open and search.”

“Can’t exactly use X-rays here... Guess I’ll try using {Ultra Transformation} to become water, or a Slime, maybe. Whatever’s inside would come out.”

I elected not to turn into water in case I accidentally died somehow. After all, my cooldown timer for revivals hadn’t reset yet.

“A wash bin, then,” Kinue said, taking one out of {Storage}. It was the kind used for washing laundry. I got inside and transformed. I ended up a wiggly slime inside the basin, my clothes left behind. It was the kind of Slime strong against physical attacks due to having no Core.

“So? See anything?” I asked Rokuko, through telepathy.

“Mmm, not really... Hopefully it’s not transparent. Do you feel anything weird, Keima?”

“Not really sure what ‘weird’ would be here, to be honest.”

“Okay, I’m sticking my hand in. Don’t eat me, okay?” Rokuko said, then jabbed her hand inside me. *Whoa, what the hell?! Uwooooh, it feels so weird. Ah, hey, d-don’t stir, ah! Nyoooo!*

“Mm, I don’t feel anything that’s invisible... What about you, Keima?”

“Eep, ah, er... I don’t feel nothin’... Whew, and now I know it feels like to have something weird inside me, so... Ah, ah!”

“Come on, Keima, stop with the weird noises.”

“H-Hey, I’m only doing this, ’cause, eep, you keep stirring, c’mon!”

“Oooh...” Finally, Rokuko understood that she was thrusting her hand inside my body, apparently. “Hmm... Would you be happy if I stuck my foot inside?”

“As a foot fetishist, I have to say yes, but also now is not the time for that!”

“True, true. Sorry,” Rokuko said, pulling her hand out. I had Niku carry me in the wash bin behind a curtain, then canceled my {Ultra Transformation}. I put my clothes back on and returned.

“Seems like there’s nothing inside me, then.”

“Ummm, we didn’t see the contents of your stomach or anything either, so maybe the thing was also gone with theeem?” Neruneh suggested, raising a hand.

“Okaaay, yeah, that would flip our foundational principle on its head.”

“How about transforming into yourself before getting stabbed, then? That would get rid of anything weird inside you. Maybe that would solve everything.”

“Ooooh! That’s Rokuko for youuuu!” Neruneh said.

“Good point. You sure are smart, Rokuko.”

Rokuko flared her nostrils with pride as Neruneh and I praised her. I got right to transforming into myself, but the catalog remained smeared over with black.

“Seems like the problem is with the dungeon itself, then. Rokuko, how are you feeling?”

“Mm. If I had to say one way or the other, I guess I feel a bit off, like I can’t use all my energy or something?”

Rokuko rolled her shoulders. Her health didn’t seem impacted, but since we didn’t remember anything else being done, it had to be something on the dungeon’s end.

“Alright, let’s look for any other functions that aren’t working. The mail function works, right?”

“Mhm. I mean, investigating is good, but what about the imperial capital?”

Oh yeah, we had been in the middle of discussing that.

“It is somewhat likely that the [Ivory Beach] will be crushed if we don’t go soon, but... Hm? Oh, wait, I actually forgot to think about the beach at all, but I guess it’s still fine.” Haku had a branch dungeon called the [Ivory Secret Spot] right next to it, but apparently she hadn’t touched it.

“Branch dungeons don’t have anything but Dummy Cores in the first place. Suzuki’s not there either, so I guess she had nothing to go after there?”

“Everything about this just feels really half-baked... But putting that aside for now, we should focus on investigating the imperial capital.”

There was no helping the fact that we couldn’t make new monsters right now; we needed to either use our current monsters, or go ourselves.

“So, back to who should go to the imperial capital...”

“Me, me!” Rei shouted. “I shall become your body, Master, and search every square inch of the capital! I implore you, please possess me!”

“Hold it right theeere. Your attack power is zero, Reeeri, I’m clearly the one who should gooo. Of course, I wouldn’t mind being possesseed.”

“Unfortunately, I cannot go far from home, so I will sit this one out.”

Thus said the three monster girls. Well, Kinue was a house fairy, so it made sense for her to stay home.

“The problem is, anyone we send will be captured the second they step foot outside the dungeon. After all, the [Ivory Secret Spot] overlaps with our dungeon’s entrance and exit.”

Haku, for the ridiculous reason of wanting to see Rokuko in a swimsuit each summer, had made basically the entire surroundings of our dungeon into her own [Ivory Secret Spot]. Suuurely it was not actually to prevent us from sneaking into the imperial capital at times like this...

“In which case, our only option is for me to use {Teleport} to go,” I said. {Teleport} will skip through filters, but before I could continue, Soto suddenly shot up a hand.

“Papa. My {Storage} connects to the imperial capital, remember?”

Oh yeah. My daughter had a cheat code. It was just the other day that I recalled how she could go anywhere in the empire in a single day. Not to mention, Soto’s dungeon menu wasn’t blacked over. She was possibly the key to flipping the situation around.

“I’ll send rats to collect intelligence. Birds will work too, right?”

“Soto... You’re so useful, somehow.”

“My fee is socks, just like always!”

“Kinue, when you take your socks off after work, send them Soto’s way.”

“If that is your will, Master,” Kinue replied, furrowing her brows with displeasure. No doubt as one who loved cleanliness, it pained her to give dirty socks away, but that was precisely why they were so valuable. They were the kind of rare socks that did not naturally exist in the world. Or, well, they existed the moment she took them off normally each day, but they were short-lived, is the point.

“Could I perhaps clean them beforehand, or...”

“No, keep them like they are! Give them raw! Please!” Soto exclaimed, shutting down Kinue’s attempt at a compromise. What a pervert. That’s my daughter for you.

“Well, that’s how it is.”

“Sigh... I suppose I must. Just this once, understand?”

“Yaaay! Thanks, Kinue!”

Kinue sighed with exasperation as Soto rejoiced.

“So, anyway. Ichika betraying us means it’s safe to assume Haku knows all our secrets—{Create Golem}, the {Storage} dungeon, and so on. That means we don’t need to worry about holding much back anymore. Soto, I’m counting on you.”

“Leave it to me, papa! My rats can breathe fire!”

Was Soto teaching her rats Fire Breath? I have to ask these questions because I know she would actually do it.

“Oh, Keima? You said holding *much* back... Are you still going to hide a little?”

“Well, there’s some things we don’t want the common man knowing, and some things that would be disappointing to see after hearing so much about. I’m taking off the seals, but still, know some restraint, basically.”

“Got it. Though it’s only really you and Soto who need to be careful.”

Yeah, pretty much.

“Anyway, Rokuko, work with Rei and the others to search for other functions that might not be usable anymore. Soto and I will probe the imperial capital.”

“Okaaay. I’ll try out everything I can think of.”

Thus concluded the meeting. We’d gotten a bit off track, but overall it was fairly productive.

I glanced up at the sky, silently.

“Hm? What’s wrong, Keima?”

“Nothing, nothing.”

Alright, time to make my first moves.

In the end, Haku never replied. We did a system test to make sure

mailing actually worked, so this more or less confirmed that Haku herself was involved here. The question was whether she was doing it willingly or not.

Thus, we decided to have me, Soto, and Niku investigate the imperial capital through the {Storage} dungeon's Master Room.

"Papa, let's start with Auntie Haku's house," Soto said.

"Wait, going right for the throat from the start? I mean, saving time is good, but..."

"I slipped in some rats with {Storage} when she invited us there before. We can use them as our home base and send out several rats without any skills."

Rats without skills could be used freely, and even those within {Storage} weren't *that* critical to keep alive. Not to mention, since they were connected by {Storage}, it wouldn't even take DP to watch them through the long-distance monitor... My daughter sure was something else.

"Master. The controller," Niku said, holding out a controller for the rats for me. It was the same kind we used all the time in the [Cave of Greed].

"Alright, let's split up and start the search."

We controlled the rats and began investigating the Ivory Villa. It was right after sunset. The hallways were lit with magic tools, but it was highly unlikely that the rats running down the corners would be found.

I immediately sent one to Haku's room. We knew where it was since Rokuko had been called to sleep with her before. The door was shut, but hm, what to do about that? For now, I had the rat press its ear against the door and listen.

...Mm, I don't hear anything.

Even cranking up the monitor's volume to maximum only led to us hearing the rat's heartbeat. It was possible, given the time, that she was just away. If that was the case, the door would probably be locked, making it difficult to get inside for a search. I decided to put her room off for later and search elsewhere.

"Soto, this place is important, so I'd like to have a rat stand watch to be sure. Add an extra one for us."

"Roger, papa. Mayu, keep an eye on Auntie Haku's room."

"Understood."

A Silky from Soto's dungeon controlled the rat in my place. A new one was sent, and I resumed from the starting point.

"Master, I discovered an underground jail. It feels... off. Maybe it's for nobles," Niku said. An underground jail, huh? Past the guards was a fairly fancy and comfortable-looking jail cell. Behind the bars was a bed so big I had no idea how it even got in there to begin with. There

was a mini kitchen complete with a mana heater for simple cooking. There was also a recliner for relaxing. The other cells were empty, and only one was especially fancy.

“Could this be Leona’s cell?” I said aloud. I seemed to remember her saying something about making her own bed in her cell, and this villa was technically part of the castle. A cell for nobles wouldn’t have a mini kitchen, probably. I figured food would be made for them.

“Nobody is inside. There are traces of it being used recently, but I don’t sense anyone hiding in there,” Niku observed. There were traces of someone having slept in the bed there recently. Naturally, we couldn’t tell how recent that was, but it should be safe to assume that a cell this fancy would be cleaned up as soon as it became empty again. And in the first place, it was strange for there to be a guard for an empty jail.

“The trash?” I asked.

“There’s fresh food waste inside. The rat is happy about that.”

There was an exceptionally long piece of apple skin in the trash, probably around one millimeter wide. Someone very skilled with their hands must have taken their time cutting an apple very creatively. It must have taken at least two days to do that, or so I would think.

“Yeaah, it’s safe to say Leona escaped.”

“If she’s just on a little trip, then she may return when she’s done.”

What kind of jail cell lets you just casually leave it? I mean, no stopping Leona, but still.

“Mayu, another guard for the cell. Niku, swap with the new rat,” Soto instructed.

“Understood.”

“At once, Soto.”

The Silky lined up the rat’s monitor next to the one showing Haku’s room, while Niku began controlling a new rat.

Soto’s rat got into the kitchen and listened in on the servants preparing dinner. It was a cook and maid; I recognized the cook.

“What, Lady Haku wants to eat again? Even after yesterday?”

“Indeed. So it seems. Oh, and she would like a meat-heavy dish once again.”

Out of context, one would want to say, “Come on, don’t be lazy, it’s your job to cook every day,” but the one asking for food here was Haku—a Dungeon Core. She didn’t need food to survive, and eating was at most something one did for pleasure. Rokuko didn’t eat anything if she wasn’t nomming on melon rolls she made herself, or eating something with me. Soto just... She had her socks.

“Three meals a day... Mm, what the heck’s happening with her? Not our place to comment on it, but hasn’t she only been drinking

cream sodas for a long time now?”

“Perhaps her stock has finally run out? She has not been to the princess’s place in some time.”

“That’s possible, since she’s forbidden from recreating cream sodas... Well, I’ll just be glad I have a chance to show off my skills.”

The cook thus began preparing a meat dish. Given the way he was pushing invisible buttons in the air, he must have been given catalog rights. Speaking of which, I recalled that all the personnel in the villa were dungeon monsters.

“Looks like something having happened to Auntie Haku just got a lot more likely, huh, papa?”

“Can’t we just follow the food and it’ll take us to her?”

“You’re right! I’ll follow after the maid’s feet, then.”

I felt a bit odd about her phrasing, but I let her be. I continued my own searching.

This seems like one of the storage buildings for her collection... Yep, the door is closed and there’s no way to get a rat inside.

“Feels like we should work on simple shut doors stopping the rats from going through.”

“Mm, what about a Ghost, then? They can go through walls.”

“A good idea, but Haku’s villa is in her dungeon territory. Can’t go through walls in a dungeon.”

Not to mention, rats could be overlooked, but a Ghost would immediately be identified as an infiltrator. Though Haku knew we used rats as scouts, so the gig might have been up already.

“Master. Could you go through the door’s slit?”

“There’s enough of a slit for a breeze to go through, but no matter how small a rat is, that’s too... Wait, I see. It doesn’t have to be a rat,” I said, taking out a sheet of paper. “{Create Golem}... Soto, make a {Storage} scroll. I’ll possess this and have it learn it.”

“Okaaay. Your Golem thing is super convenient. It’s, like, a total cheat skill.”

“Hahaha, look in a mirror.”

If I had to guess whether a sheet of paper would be identified as an enemy, the answer was probably no. Someone seeing it would be one thing, but having the rat slip it under the door shouldn’t cause any problems. Just like when I slipped a Crystal Golem into Ittetsu’s dungeon.

Thus, I infiltrated the room with a Paper Golem that knew {Storage}, then slipped a rat in through that {Storage}. The Paper Golem then went into its own {Storage} and disappeared.

“Wait, that actually works? Sure is convenient.”

“Normally it doesn’t, but I can open and close it myself, and move the space inside it.”

So in other words, it was a trick that only Soto with her {Storage} dungeon could perform. On top of that, the Paper Golem would be drawing in mana from the dungeon, allowing me to use {Storage} again. It was an infinity trick. Were this a card game, it'd be banned instantly.

"I feel like there's nothing Soto and Master can't do together," Niku said.

"That's why I've been holding back until now. If Haku knew all this, she'd either crush us or work us to the bone."

"I think Auntie Haku would pay us fairly and give us time off, though," Soto said.

"As much as she gives Wataru, at least, and I wouldn't survive that much work," I replied. I didn't want to give up my current life where I could just chill at home and do construction work as a hobby.

The collection room didn't have anything notable, but we used the same method to infiltrate Haku's room. We went in silently and saw that no one was there. There was only a soft-looking bed with curtains and a writing desk. There was also a fluffy carpet which made it a bit harder for the rat to walk, and a closet.

And an empty room invited nothing more than for someone to search it.

"Seems a bit hard for a rat to open a drawer."

"Master, should I help?"

"Nah, it's fine. Let's start with the easy ones first."

I ran the rat up the bed and looked around the room. Inside the trash can beside the desk was a balled-up piece of paper. Time to investigate.

"Something's written on it. Let's see..."

Spread out, the paper said... "overtaken," "Core 10," "danger"...?

"It looks like a request for dinner," Niku said. "Erm... 'I want to eat meat'?"

"Gosh, Auntie's spelling is so bad. And her handwriting is rough, too, like she was super duper hungry."

"What the? Are we looking at the same... Oh, I get it. The auto-translator," I said. The spelling errors Soto was talking about were not something I could see, but were probably some sort of code. "Here's what it reads to me: 'overtaken,' 'Core 10,' 'danger.'"

"Um, what are you talking about, papa?"

"What you're seeing is probably a coded message. If the spelling mistakes are written in some consistent way that forms a code, then what I'm seeing is unmistakably the message she intended to give."

In short, the auto-translator that Heroes have always skips the laborious process of decoding messages and just tells us what is written outright. I continued to be impressed by how many areas in

which the auto-translators just worked. This was a message either for someone who knew the code, or who knew Heroes could read it.

“So, that message... ‘Overtaken’ is a big one, but ‘Core 10’ and ‘danger’...”

“Yeah. If we believe the message outright, then this is a note Haku left to try and convey that Core 10 was taking her over.”

How would Core 10 do that after being destroyed? Well, I guess Core 10 was an undead-type Core. Those certainly wouldn’t go down easily... I didn’t know what method he had used, but he had probably escaped the killing blow somehow.

“Papa, the maid started leaving with the food. I’ll follow her.”

“Oh, this could be important. Let’s focus on them for now.”

I left the rat in the room to the Silky, and followed after the maid bringing dinner to Haku.

She arrived at a dining hall, with a long rectangular table within. Haku was sitting at the far end on her own, sipping tea provided by another maid.

“You’re slow. I was losing my patience,” she said.

“My apologies,” the maid said, bowing and placing the food on the table. The menu was grilled chicken with bread and soup. Haku picked up her cutlery and began digging in, without any pre-meal prayer or anything.

“That sure is a lot of bread,” Soto observed.

“Grilled chicken is pretty good with rice, too... Man, I’m hungry now. Let’s get something to eat, too.”

“Master. I request a grilled burger.”

I went with the flow and bought food for us with DP. We finished eating at around the same time she did.

“I shall now take a hot bath and rest. Do not interrupt,” Haku said.

“Understood. The arrangements have been made.”

Oh, going to the bath now, I see... This isn’t something I should watch, right? I’ll leave it to Soto and Niku.

“Papa, we’ll cut off video so you only get audio! Listen closely!”

“You make it sound as if I’ll get off to the sounds, dearest daughter.”

In the meantime, I would search other areas. Though I would be listening, of course.

“Oh? Auntie isn’t taking off all her clothes even though she’s getting in the bath?”

“Hm? You’re not talking about a bathing suit or anything, right?”

“Nope, we’re talking a full garterbelt here. That actually makes it super sexy!”

The thigh thing, right? I got an urge to look, but I wouldn’t be

able to face Rokuko if I did, so I held back.

“Bleh... Acting like a human is a pain. You sure keep giving me hell, eh? Can’t even act like I want to,” Haku muttered, but not at all in her normal tone of voice. It was clear she was talking to someone inside herself.

Yeah, okay. There’s no doubt about it now—Core 10’s taken over her body.

The fact he thinks he has to act like a human here means he probably can’t access Haku’s memories? If he did, he would know he had no reason to hide that she’s a Dungeon Core. It was also unclear whether he had access to her proper dungeon functions. He might have had restrictions like we did now.

“Feels like I finally have control of the body, at least? Let’s see about the memories... ngh! Heh, heh heh. Your resistance is futile. Look, your body already belongs to me! Just accept your defeat already...!”

Given those comments, we could guess Haku’s consciousness was still alive and well. At the moment, only her body—and perhaps the dungeon functions—were lost.

“Oh, by the way, papa, Auntie is squeezing her boobs and pinching her nipples right now. It looks like fun! I’m jealous.”

“Please don’t tell me these things.”

I could hear the splashing and squishing sounds. This was probably a psychological attack. Haku was apparently resisting on the inside, after all.

Okay... I understand the situation, but what do we do about it?

“Excuse me, Lady Haku.”

“What is it? I said not to bother me.”

“Apologies. However, we were instructed to inform you when Lady Dolce returned...”

“Oho! She’s already back, huh! Now that is a fast worker!” Haku exclaimed, and I heard the sound of water sloshing off her as she stood. She sounded pretty happy. Apparently she would change her plans and go see Dolce instead of sleep. She put clothes back on, so now I could finally look at the monitor.

Haku (Core 10) marched down the hallway with us stealthily following, until he reached the audience chamber where Dolce was waiting. He walked past Dolce to the throne, and only looked at her upon sitting down.

“I shall hear your report,” he said, crossing his legs. Pretty cocky.

“Yes, my lady! I have performed the acts of destruction you ordered at the specified dungeon. I believe the pearl you granted me has been filled with more than enough energy. Furthermore, the secondary objective of rescuing Suzuki the Hero was completed

without incident.”

“I see. Hrm... But does that mean you failed to complete the primary objective?”

“We succeeded in killing Core 695’s Dungeon Master by having our planted spy betray him.”

“Heheh, good, good. Should have said that to start. Now, where is the Hero?”

“Here,” Dolce said, opening her {Storage} and dropping Suzuki.

“Ouch! That hurt, motherfucker... Wait, where am I? Guess it really did take just a second,” Suzuki said, looking around after falling on his ass. “Oh, you’re... Who the hell are you? Feels like I’ve seen you before... Whatever. Point is, you saved me, yeah? I’ll thank you for that. Won’t even mind making you my woman.”

“Hrm. He is even less well trained than I thought. I see, that explains why he was left to rot. Then again, even a rotten Hero is a Hero. And one with {Ultra Healing}, at that. He will have his uses,” Haku (Core 10) said, sighing. “You may leave. Imprison the Hero.”

“Understood.”

“Hey, don’t ignore me when I’m thanking you... Wait, prison? Why... Hey! Let go of me!”

“Silence. As Lady Haku ordered you to be imprisoned, I will imprison you. Be grateful that your head is still on your shoulders after that rudeness... Or rather, I suppose you wouldn’t die even if I were to cut off your head? Perhaps I should cut it off five or so times so you will learn your lesson.”

“Tch, fine, fine. I’m coming... Good grief, none of you have a sense of humor. Boring.”

“It is good that you are obedient,” Haku (Core 10) said. “Now... Did you have anything else to report?”

“Yes. I have brought back the one who was infiltrating the dungeon Suzuki was within. I shall return them to you,” Dolce said, popping Ichika out of her {Storage}—this time, gently. Ichika promptly bowed.

“Greetings, most honorable Lady Haku. Do you mind if I ask what in the world drove you t— Oops, my bad. I understand everything now. Guess I should actually say it’s nice to meet you?”

Haku (Core 10) furrowed his brows with displeasure at Ichika, who had apparently seen through him.

“Whoa now, don’t worry. I’m totes on your side, for real. The name’s Ichika. I’m bound to Lady Haku by a contract, and you know what, even if you aren’t Haku, you technically are, so the contract’s still the real deal,” Ichika said, noticing Haku (Core 10)’s displeasure and emphasizing that she wasn’t an enemy. I had to say, I was impressed by how bold she was being.

“Oho. Now... Who might you be?”

“A contract slave. You have the duty to pay me for the jobs I do, and I can’t do a thing to hurt you in the meantime. Basically a dungeon monster, if you catch my drift. You can even move me with the placement function.”

“Contract, hm...? I see. I understand that I have a duty here as well,” Haku (Core 10) said, closing his eyes as if searching through her memories. “So, what do you demand from me as payment?”

“Well. I kinda don’t have anywhere to go, so how about we put that off for now and you just let me stay by your side?”

“You? Hmph. You have far from earned that much trust.”

“But I mean, if you’re gonna try to take Lady Haku’s place, you’re gonna have a helluva time, no? Like, I called you out in a second. With me around, I can give some tips and stuff to try and smooth things over, my man.”

“Hrm... The suggestion is worth considering, at least.”

“Just leave all your tea and stuff to me. Not to mention, weak little ol’ me couldn’t even put a scratch on you. What’ve you got to worry about?”

“Heh heh, I see you know your place, human. I like that. Consider your wish granted.”

“I thank you ever so much. May I remain in your good graces.”

Looked like Haku (Core 10) had decided to keep Ichika by his side.

“So, what should I call you, boss?”

“It does not matter; Haku will do. From this point forward, I shall become the Ivory Goddess.”

“Understood, Lady Haku,” Ichika said, bowing respectfully. Which made her see us. (Our rat.) “Hmmm? Looks like there’s a dirty rat here. That’ll make my food go bad. Dolce, could you take it out for me?”

“Why should I deign to exterminate rodents?”

“No squabbling. Do it.”

“Understood, Lady Haku!”

Dolce snapped her fingers, and all of our monitors blinked out instantly.

All of the rats who had infiltrated the villa were dead.

“Oof... Rest in peace. They’re all dead. Was that a curse?” Soto asked.

“Probably. What about the {Storage} rat?”

“It was, like, an area-of-effect attack on the whole villa, so they all got hit. We’ll need to send new ones. It’ll take a sec.”

Other rats infiltrating the imperial capital were safe, so we weren’t locked out for good, but we would need some time to investigate the

villa for the second time. "Papa, want to try again as soon as we can?"

"Nah, we're good. There might have been more we could have learned, but at the very least we understand the situation now. Keep it to just watching the villa from afar."

"Okaaaay. Oh, and I'll share the video with you too, papa."

So in the end, it turned out that Dolce and Ichika were operating on the orders of Haku under Core 10's control. Dolce was reporting that they succeeded in killing me, so it would probably take a bit for him to notice I was alive.

As I thought about how to organize this intelligence, and what to share with Rokuko, she contacted me. "Keima, we have a visitor."

"Hm? Who is it?"

"Core 219," she replied. That was Tsia's dungeon, known as the [Flower Garden of Light]. She was our neighbor on the opposite side of the [Flame Caverns].

"She's a member of the traitor faction, right? What's she want with us?"

"She wants to talk about rats, if you catch my drift."

Oho. Now that was timely.

"Roger. I'll be right there. Be sure to join us, Rokuko."

"Kaaay."

I went to talk to Core 219, who likely had something we wanted to know.

"Why hello there, my dear little sister! How are you doing? It is I, Core 219, here to see you!"

"Quit joking around. I'm not in Succubus form right now," I shot back. She was as flamboyant as ever. Core 219 danced atop the sofa in our inn's parlor, cross-dressing and maintaining the air of one who feels like they could turn anything into a theater act just by their tone of voice. Today she didn't have flowers growing out of her back; it was just a white suit. Her makeup also seemed on the lighter side.

"Oh, you're no fun. But perhaps I can hardly blame you. I heard what happened," Core 219 said, smoothly sitting down. I sat on the opposite side with Rokuko, impressed by how sharp she was as always.

"And what did you hear, exactly?"

"A certain wraith attacked your dungeon and stole a Hero, no? Ah, what's that? You wish to know how I am aware? I happened to see until the point the rats were all exterminated," Core 219 said. She "saw" until that point... Meaning she was also using her monitor function to spy on the report.

"You were watching, huh? That'll make things fast... Seems like Haku's been taken over by Core 10."

"Hm. That explains it," Core 219 replied, nodding casually. It was

Rokuko who reacted with shock.

“What?! Explain yourself, Keima! I thought Core 10 died!”

Oh yeah, I hadn't mentioned it to Rokuko yet.

“Why is a dead Core taking over Haku?!”

“I mean, he's an undead Core... He must have pulled some trickery to survive, or rather, stay undead, or whatever. I don't really know the details, but...”

“It is not unfathomable. Undead are known as such precisely because they can revive,” Core 219 said with a shrug. Rokuko chomped at her next.

“Core 219, weren't you a part of the Core 10 extermination war?! You DID make sure you killed him, right?!”

“Of course. I saw with my own eyes the Dungeon Core get pulverized into dust. Another species might be blind, but we Dungeon Cores would never mistake the death of another. What we slew was unmistakably a true Dungeon Core.”

“Maybe it was someone else's Dungeon Core, then?!”

“If you're so suspicious, why not try challenging Core 10 to a Dungeon Battle? You will only receive a message that no such Core exists,” Core 219 said, demonstrating the process and getting rejected. Rokuko did the same, and also had her challenge rejected due to the Core not existing.

“Regardless, I must say I have no doubts that Core 10 has taken her over. My fair lady changed greatly over these past few days. If I had tried to describe her new behavior, I very well would have said that it was as if she had been taken over by Core 10.”

Yeah, makes sense.

“So, how did you figure it out, Core 219? Despite being in Tsia, I mean.”

“It's simple. My fair lady's villa is filled with monsters serving Cores of her faction. Through one such monster I learned of the change in her, and have been investigating this myself. The maid I sent reported that my fair lady was suddenly acting as if they were all humans.”

That did make sense. I thought that Core 10 couldn't see Haku's map, but in reality he did, and saw a bunch of enemy markers. Dungeon monsters from other dungeons in human form would be indistinguishable from normal humans. It would be like “humans are among us.” And with Core 10 being the former pope, he might have even gone so far as to think “we are among the humans.” He had been infiltrating humanity as the former pope, after all.

“Hence acting like a human to try and fit in with the crowd, then. Makes sense.”

“My beloved little sister, your mind astounds once again. May I

pat your head to celebrate your genius?"

"I'll pass. Also, don't call me your little sister when I'm not even in Succubus form."

Also, I will not be accepting requests to turn into Succubus form.

"So what now, Keima? We're saving my sister, obviously," Rokuko said, glaring at me with eyes of hope. I mean, yeah. Haku was in trouble, and considering all she had done for us, we could hardly just not help her.

"Er, yep. Of course we are."

Even if we didn't owe her one, we really didn't have any other option. Core 10 taking over the empire would be the worst possible scenario for us; even if Haku managed to kill herself and take him down with her, it didn't take a genius to see that the empire would subsequently be engulfed in a violent war. Then there was the fact that once he learned I was alive he'd send assassins—he might even kill Rokuko, since killing dungeons was a surefire way to kill Dungeon Masters.

Even if Haku didn't approve of my relationship with Rokuko, we needed her in power. And I might be able to use saving her as a shield for being with Rokuko. Really, if this wasn't enough, then nothing would be.

"You'll be helping, too, right, Core 219?"

"Of course, Rokuko. I am bound not to betray her, and if she is taken over by Core 10, then not rescuing her would be a breach of contract. Would it not be, hm?" Core 219 asked, winking at me. Oh yeah, we had that contract... And if I agreed, then not following would in fact be a breach of contract. We had her help for sure.

"Yep, not rescuing someone from great danger is the same as betraying them. I hereby request your proactive assistance, Core 219."

"I would prefer you to address me as 'dearest brother' there, but very well."

We exchanged a handshake.

"Now then, shall we share all we know with each other?"

"Sure. Though I feel like we've pretty much already said all we know."

"I cannot say I know much myself either, but let us all be forthcoming nonetheless."

And so, Core 219 allied with us to rescue Haku.

Chapter 3

I went over what we had learned, for both Rokuko's and Core 219's sakes. Core 219 then shared a lot of stuff with us, too, including how she had seen the rat.

"The moss on the ceiling was your subordinate...?"

"I am a plant-type Core, you know. Is there anything strange about that?"

Apparently her maid subordinate intentionally didn't clean the moss in the villa, leaving chunks of it in key locations. Said moss was the same white as the construction material used to make the villa, so one couldn't even see it unless they looked *very* carefully—a terrifying spy indeed.

"So, after the rats were killed, they took Suzuki to the underground jail?"

"Indeed. And of course, not to the cell Leona was once in. He complained on the way, but when she showed him a black pearl and asked if he wanted power, he obediently followed."

"So that really was Leona's cell... Oh, and that pearl was probably the one she used on us, too."

It was fine for jails to be filled with moss, so she had full access to spy on them. *Yeaahh, I'm gonna tell Kinue to make sure and purge the moss out of the chief residence and underground jail.*

"That said, I could not infiltrate my fair lady's very own place of sleep. It is cleaned to a shine each time... Could you share that memo or what have you with me?"

"Sure. Feel free to look at everything we recorded, really."

"Many thanks. Most of what I know comes from a report through possession."

I took this opportunity to share everything we had uncovered. I let Core 219 see the footage we had of Haku's room, the conversation between the servants, and the bathing scene. That last one definitely gave me pause, but then again, Core 219 was just cross-dressing, and wasn't actually a guy.

"Oooh, how despicable! Core 10, how I envy... Erm, despise you! That said, my fair lady truly does have shapely breasts. I would like to stroke them with my fingertips."

"They feel great to touch, too," Rokuko said. "They're all boingy and bouncy, and her pearly white skin is so smooth."

“Rokuko, we don’t need to hear that.”

Naturally, I looked away from the footage. Or the bathing scene, rather.

And so, we finished sharing intelligence. However, all we really knew at this stage was that Core 10 had taken over Haku. We didn’t know what their plan with Suzuki the Hero was, or how Core 10 had taken over Haku, or any of the other key facts.

“We would certainly like more details,” Core 219 said. “In particular, we won’t be able to do anything unless we figure out how Core 10 took my fair lady over.”

“Yeah... I’ll ask my subordinates if the Holy Kingdom has any hints,” I said, sending a mail to Narikin with instructions.

“Wait, Keima. Maybe we could learn something from asking Father?” Rokuko suggested.

“Oh yeah... That’s an option. Heck, there’s a chance Father might just solve everything himself.”

Thus, we decided to use GP to see if Father would save Haku for us.

“But first, I should probably send a normal mail. Let’s see... ‘Seems like Haku’s been taken over by Core 10; how much GP do I have to give for you to save her?’”

“So this is the mail function Aidy described... I must say, I envy you all being able to contact Father directly. Incidentally, what is GP?” Core 219 asked, hand on chin.

“Hm? It’s like, god points or whatever. If you offer them up to Father, he’ll listen to requests. Might not grant them, though. You didn’t know about them?”

According to Aidy, Rokuko unlocked them after acquiring a certain amount or something. I would’ve thought that Core 219 unlocked it a long time ago due to her long life and being worshiped as the Goddess of Fertile Crops or whatever. But when I expressed that, she just shrugged.

“Ah, that would explain why I am unfamiliar. When it comes to divine plants and crops and all that, it is my superior Core Number 7 who is known as the God of the Mountains. Not to mention, while I would if anything like to be called the Goddess of Theater, I hardly doubt I could beat my master in that respect.”

“You have a theater master?”

“Indeed! A spiritual master, who taught me the concept of Takarazuka Revue! They owned the imperial theater, but in truth were of another world. In short, they were a Hero who loved the theater.”

“Huh, hadn’t heard about them before.”

You know, as was kind of obvious from the Hero Workshop just

having Hero in its name, the imperial capital really did seem heavily influenced by Heroes. It was kinda funny when you considered that it was a country formed by a Dungeon Core.

Father gave his reply as we talked. I looked at it right away.

This is pretty similar to the time with Core 564. You could call this the completed version of what happened there. However, since it's Core 10's doing, I can't interfere this time. You'll have to settle it on your own. In return, I'll ask a reliable person to help in my stead. And by the way... some advice. You shouldn't use your Divine Bedding collection yet. It takes half a month of sleeping for that to turn you into a god. It'll be too late by then, so wait until you've saved Haku first. Incidentally—you already know how to save Haku, Keima. P.S. Go ahead and give ten GP for this advice.

Thus concluded the message. Didn't think I could pay GP *after* getting advice. The God of Darkness sure has a lot of wiggle room.

"I don't know what helper he's talking about, but at the very least it looks like we have something of a two-week time limit to solve this before it gets out of hand," I said, showing the message to Rokuko and Core 219, while taking the time to send over ten of the 108 GP we had earned at some point.

"And apparently you know how to save her already, Keima?"

"I mean, it does say this is basically the same as the Core 564 incident, but... Back then, we just chopped off the part infected with Leona's bug, and had Father take care of it."

Maybe that implied Leona was involved this time, too? She had escaped her cell, so it was possible.

"For now, we can probably guess the solution here is the one we used for Aidy, not for Core 564."

"Oh, right."

Aidy likewise had gone crazy after destroying an artificial Dungeon Core. At the time Father advised us that the brooch on her chest was the culprit, and we saved her by destroying it.

"Why didn't he just say that it's the same as with Aidy to begin with?"

"Gods apparently have a bunch of complex rules, you know. Maybe since it's advice and nothing more than that, he couldn't just say the solution outright?"

That's a pain.

"But was Haku wearing a brooch on her chest?" I asked.

"It doesn't have to be a brooch, surely. Right, Core 219? We saw it."

"Indeed. In the bathing scene which my beloved little sister averted her eyes from, there was one piece of clothing Haku wore. In retrospect, indeed, it truly stood out," Core 219 agreed. The bathing

scene meant...

"The garter...?"

"Oh wait, you actually did look, Keima? Perv."

"Ahahaha, that simply goes to show that my beloved little sister is a healthy human male."

"No, no, Soto just narrated it out loud for me." Even though I didn't want her to. I didn't look at it for a second, I swear.

"So I guess we can say that to save Haku, we need to destroy the white gem on the garter. How do we do that, Keima?"

"I mean, what can we do but go and smash it directly...? Though one wrong move and we'd blow her leg off, too."

"My fair lady surely has the means to regenerate a leg or two."

Problem solved. Really, in that case, cutting off her leg would be the faster way to sever Core 10's brainwashing. We might even be able to ask Father to heal it outright.

"Since I don't particularly want to die, I guess we'll send monsters in the night to assassinate her leg," I concluded.

"Now, now, my beloved little sister. She has that Wraith protecting her, no? Assassination will not be easy."

Dolce, in other words. Yeah... She wouldn't make things easy.

"In which case... We might want to bet on this helper that Father's talking about?"

"But who might that be?" Rokuko asked.

A truly good question. I had no idea whom Father the God of Darkness might be friends with, and if it was one of his Dungeon Core children, then it could basically be anyone. The fact he could ask Cores I didn't even know about for help made the possibilities endless.

"I imagine they'll come to us rather than the other way around, so let's call it here for today."

"Even though there's a time limit to save Haku?"

"I don't think one day will make a difference. If it were that urgent, Father would have warned us... And real talk, I'm exhausted. I need to sleep," I said, yawning. Despite all the time I spent recovering with the Divine Bedding, it had still only been a day since I was killed and revived. I used my head too much.

"Oho. You may rest upon my bosom, dear sister. I shall grant you peaceful rest."

"Hold it right there, Core 219. My boobs would be a way better pillow!"

"I'll pass on both," I said. I wanted to sleep on my ol' reliable pillow.

And so, that brought the day to a close. Core 219 was taking this opportunity to sleep at the inn. She was apparently willing to pay our fees, so I let her stay in the suite. Hopefully liquid fertilizer would do

as a drink for her.

* * *

The next day, *he* came.

“Heya, Wataru. You sure are full of energy right in the morning.”

“Yup! Good morning, Keima! Sure is nice out, huh!”

Wataru, the Hero blessed with ultra good luck. As of late his work locations were decided by throwing darts on a board, making his visits to the town rather irregular. For him to visit the chief residence first thing in the morning, it wasn’t hard to imagine certain forces—such as the God of Darkness—at work here. It was highly possible he had altered cause and effect or something.

I invited Wataru to the parlor, where I heard him out while Neruneh served him. Incidentally, the flower vase on the table was a spy tool for Core 219. It’d be annoying to have to keep holding information-sharing sessions.

“So, what’s your business?” I asked.

“I mean, my usual debt payments. Oh, but maybe you’re the one who has something to say to me?” Wataru asked, grinning and in a good mood. I felt like he had already finished paying back his debt, but whatever. If he was willing to pay, I was willing to... take his money.

“Well, there is one thing. I’ll bring you up to speed. Truth is, we’re going to hold a wedding soon.”

“What?! C-Congratulations?! ”

“And so, I really want you to be there for it, Wataru. I mean, you have good luck and everything, right? I’ll serve those rice ball things you like, so hey, whaddaya say?”

“Of course I’ll go! Man, finally going to score with Rokuko, huh? That is a cause for celebration! How did you convince Haku?”

“Hm? I think you’ve got the wrong idea here. This is a wedding being held by Beddhist followers I’m talking about here, alright? I’m just helping out as the pope to make sure it’s a happy one. They’re adventurers and big fans of yours, apparently.”

“Whaaat...” Wataru slumped with visible disappointment. But, well, he had already agreed to go, and I was going to hold him to that. They actually were Wataru fans, so.

“Er, well, sure... I’ll still go. I can use that as an excuse to visit again later and see Neruneh, so yeah.”

“Oh my my, I hope you know to bring souveniirs?”

“Ahaha, you can count on me, Neruneh! I’ll bring plenty of rare magic scrolls!” Wataru exclaimed, full of energy. Well, as long as he was happy.

“So, why the good mood, Wataru?” I asked, giving a light jab.

Wataru chilled out a bit and began to explain. “Well, actually, I was killing time until you woke up at the rat races, and for the first time I won big! I’ve literally never won so much there before!”

“...Aaah.”

I had completely forgotten. The other participants were one thing, but we had been fiddling with it so that when Wataru bet, he would only ever lose or get small wins. And by we, I mean Ichika.

We were borrowing Soto’s Silky and working hard to fill the holes left by Ichika to keep the inn running, but... There were so many we just kept missing until we tripped over them.

“I see, that’s good. But that can’t be it, right?” I asked. After all, otherwise Wataru wouldn’t say, “Don’t you have something to say to me?” like a girlfriend after going to the beauty parlor.

“Yep. On the way here, a god spoke to me and said that you would tighten my bond with Neruneh, Keima.”

“Did they now...?”

As expected, Father’s helper was Wataru. My payment would be hooking him up with Neruneh. That certainly was cheap considering how valuable Wataru’s help would be.

“Wait, you believe me?” Wataru asked.

“I just asked for help from a god, too, so, y’know. Oh, and I’m not talking about Beddhism’s Sototemporarily, to be clear.”

“I see, I see. That must mean the dream was true, then.”

It turned out that the God of Darkness could communicate through dreams. It made sense, really. Darkness do be a night thing.

“Unironically, I feel like I’m already doing a lot to get you with Neruneh?”

“Hm? What?”

“It’s trueeee. Master really is doing a looot,” Neruneh agreed. The fact she remembered Wataru’s name at all was proof of that. I had gone ahead and told her to stick with him when we met him by chance in the Demon Realm, and unlike Haku I wasn’t planning on interfering. At most I would just respect Neruneh’s wishes, and I figured she was fine being with Wataru anyway. Probably.

“Now that you mention it...”

“Riiight?”

Also, I had to question his actively talking about me “hooking him up with Neruneh” while she’s right there. Am I even needed here?

“Anyway, it’s true that I need help, so yeah, come on over. Or really, it involves you, so you have to help whether you want to or not.”

“Huh. Really?”

“When everything’s over, I’ll send Neruneh to Tsia on errands, and you can go along as her guard-slash-luggage-carrier to have lots of

dates. Hey, feel free to go on dungeon dates, even.”

“Erm, alright. So, what do you need me for?” Wataru asked, sighing and being very understanding.

“Not sure if I should be the one saying this, but do you ever get called gullible?”

“Ahahaha. I mean, if you’re saying I don’t have a choice, I probably don’t, right? If you’d go that far, I don’t even have to hear the details to know I’m stuck in this. Getting paid at all is really a blessing at this point.”

“Oh, huh. It’s not that you’re gullible, it’s just that you trust me that much.”

“I know you’re the type to cut down on payments if you’re dealing with someone who tries to wiggle out of responsibility, at least.”

It’s good that you understand.

“So, what’s the plan? I’ll do anything I can.”

“Hm? Did you just say *anything*?”

“Er, yeah, but... Okay, now I’m scared,” Wataru said, trembling with fear.

“It’s simple. Just go and cut Haku’s leg off for me!”

“Um.”

“Man, I owe you one. We never would have stood a chance without you.”

“Er, hold on wait, what’s going on?!” Wataru exclaimed, falling into a panic. Obviously—I would be surprised too if someone suddenly asked me to cut off my boss’s leg.

“Well, I just wanted to see you surprised. I’ll explain the circumstances.”

“R-Right! Wait... It’s not a joke?” Wataru swallowed hard and readied himself. I went ahead and explained what he needed to know, at the very least.

“Haku’s in the process of being brainwashed by an undead monster. Right now she’s doing her best to fight it, but her body’s completely under its control, and to save her we need to destroy the accessory forming the core of the brainwashing.”

“I see... That explains why I don’t have a choice here.”

“Yep. You’re not a coward that wouldn’t help Haku after all she’s done, and I know that.”

Wataru nodded with a solemn expression.

“Of course I’ll help. Though if we just need to cut off the accessory, why cut off the whole leg?”

“It’s an accessory on her thigh, but we don’t know how strong it is. What we do know is that it’s very likely to be very durable. Amputating the whole leg is more reliable, and Haku won’t have a problem with regenerating a leg or two.”

“Right, right. There’s Restoration magic and whatnot,” Wataru said, nodding.

“Incidentally, our time limit’s somewhere around half a month. That comes from a reliable source.”

“...Then we’ll barely make it even if we leave now. We should talk details on the way,” Wataru said, standing.

I stopped him. “Hold it. I’ve actually got a way to get to the imperial capital in just one day.”

“One day? But how?”

One couldn’t blame him for being surprised. The last time we went to the imperial capital, it had taken half a month even with shortcuts.

“I guess calling it a trade secret won’t be enough, huh? To keep it to what’s safe to explain... We’ll use {Teleportation}. You don’t mind being in {Storage} on the way there, right?”

“Er, not really, but... {Teleportation}?”

Naturally, I had no intention of explaining anything about dungeons here.

“{Teleportation}...? That’s an ultra rare ritual spell that uses a ton of mana from the air, right? Do you have a commune of magicians here that all know the spell?”

“Well, yeah. Haku visits this town, y’know? It’s only natural we’d be ready for emergencies. It goes right to the imperial capital.”

“Makes sense,” Wataru said, then tilted his head. “So wait, it wasn’t necessary the last time we went to the imperial capital together?”

“Don’t be dumb. This is a top-secret method, y’know? We couldn’t use it for formal affairs.”

“Oh, right. Good point,” Wataru said, nodding. “Could it be that you’re part of the group that cast it, Keima?”

“Good insight. Haku taught it to me through a scroll a while ago,” I replied. Though I was the only one who actually knew it in the town. I’d need to have a bunch of people help in a performance to trick Wataru. Neruneh could repeat the chant even if she didn’t have the spell herself. Oh, and Core 219 could use it too, if I recalled? I’d have them join.

“Now, let me introduce you to a key ally of ours,” I said, clapping my hands. The door to the parlor shot open, and orchestral music flowed in from somewhere. It was a loud, rhythmical track that made one think of the opening to a movie or the raising of a curtain. Core 219 entered with it playing as background music. Her flashy white outfit had bright golden embroidery. Her blonde hair was cut short, and she had movie-star features. The thick makeup on her face was the same as when I had first seen her. She was refraining from having

flowers grow as she walked, but the flower in the vase danced along to the music.

And finally, as the song climaxed, she planted her feet before Wataru and me, with her arms lifted up in the shape of a Y.

“Greetings! I have heard your plight! You are Wataru the Hero, yes?!”

“Er, what, wh-who is this person?!”

Wataru faltered. I understood how he felt; this was like something out of a theater troupe. However, Core 219 had absolutely insisted on introducing herself to Wataru like so. She had even brought her plant orchestra with her (in pots).

“She works for Haku.”

“Aaah...”

That alone was enough for him to understand. Haku did have a lot of weirdos working for her...

“Greetings, Wataru the Hero. I am Number 219. But that name is surely unusual for you to pronounce, so you can call me Sieghart... Or no, just Sieg,” Core 219 said, giving Wataru a handshake with an exaggerated flourish. Sieghart was apparently Core 219’s pen name, and the name her Hero (theater) master had given her.

“Errm, Sieg? That outfit you’re wearing...”

“Indeed, I was taught by the owner of a certain theater in the imperial capital. It is known as the ‘Takarazuka Revue’ in the world of Heroes, no? In which case, it is a perfect match for me to wear when greeting you.”

“Ah, the revue! Right, right, I never actually went to the theater here before. I’ll check it out once all this business is over,” Wataru said, nodding to himself. That would probably lead to him investigating the [Rabbit Rest Spot’s] idol, too. It might be smart to take the initiative and reveal that I was a Hero from another world before he really sniffed it out on his own. The only reason I had been hiding it from him in the first place was because I thought he’d let it slip to others.

“Erm, Sieg. Sorry if this is rude, but... are you a girl or a boy?”

“I am a woman, but you may treat me as either. Oh, and allow me to write a story of your life.”

“Erm, I’m not sure if it would be a very interesting story, but if you don’t mind that...”

“But your life has so many twists and turns, Wataruuu. Like when a cross-dresser tricked you into a fake marriage,” Neruneh interjected.

“Oho. Sounds fascinating. Do tell the details.”

“Neruneh?! Don’t tell people that!”

It seemed Core 219 and Wataru had made fast friends. He sure had Chad blood.

“Anyway,” I said, “getting back on track... Wataru, you’ll be having an audience with Haku when you go back to the imperial capital, right?”

“Huh? Oh, yes. I always go through an audience at her villa.”

“Convenient timing. Let’s go for a surprise attack.”

The plan was simple: Wataru would have an audience with Haku. We would launch a surprise attack. The end.

If things went well, this whole mess would end after one strike. And if it didn’t, we would at least have a chance to fight Core 10 without fighting our way to him.

“Ideally the surprise attack works, but if it ends up being a battle we’ll need more than Wataru. After all, we’re dealing with Haku here, and her Four Braves or whatever they were called. He’ll need help.”

“Yep. I’ll be trusting my back to you, Keima.”

“Yeaaah... I’m not getting around fighting here, am I...?”

Given that this was a surprise attack, Wataru would be the only one in the audience hall. Our fighters would be all those who could fit in Wataru’s {Storage}. I was a strong fighter on my own, and my {Storage} plus summon magic meant even more fighters. I could even get Niku’s Kobolds in, if I claimed they were my summons. If I really wanted to, I could use my cover as a {Teleport} crew member to refuse to go, but my going would unexpectedly make a big difference in our power levels, so I didn’t really have a choice.

“I’ll need some time to prepare,” I said. “We make our move tomorrow.”

“Right. I’ll get ready, too,” Wataru replied.

Really, I just wanted to rest another day since my {Ultra Transformation} extra life hadn’t regenerated yet. Wearing the Divine Quilt as a cape wouldn’t be enough to allow me to let my guard down, since divine attacks would still go through it. We were dealing with the Ivory Goddess here, after all. It wouldn’t be odd for her Four Braves to have divine attacks, too.

“I shall make preparations as well. Do tell if you have a need for anything. Now, now, there is no need to be hesitant, my dear Wataru. Keima and I may as well be siblings!”

“Siblings, eh? That’s nice.”

There was a small part of me that was glad that Core 219 didn’t use “my beloved little sister” there.

“Oh, right. There’s something else I need to say...”

“Hm? What is it?”

“Ichika’s betrayed us and joined the other side. She’s our enemy now, so don’t let your guard down even if she acts like an ally.”

“What?” Wataru said, his eyes widening.

“That’s surprising. I mean, THAT Ichika? What? Wait, did you

even free her from being a slave?”

“Haku’s the head of the empire, y’know. She can take off a collar or two if she wants to. Besides... she was always Haku’s spy. Be careful if you ever buy a slave of your own, Wataru.”

“Er, right. Speaking of which, there was a time when she was pretty insistent on me buying a slave. I never did, since I didn’t feel right owning someone else... Oh, is Kuro fine?”

“Yeah, already taken care of.”

I wonder if she had some rule to always have slaves spy on Heroes. Or wait... Wouldn’t that mean Suzuki the Hero had a spy among his slaves? I needed to ask Elulu later. It was pretty possible she was that spy, even. Not that it mattered now that she was a dungeon monster, though.

I went ahead and told him about Suzuki the Hero, too.

“By the way, Wataru. Do you know Suzuki the Hero?”

“Suzuki... Oh, Dragon. I met him once, but he was in a state of terror and couldn’t talk. Unfortunately.”

That was probably the fake-Suzuki doppelgänger. The one we were using to pass off the idea he had been traumatized in our dungeon.

“He’s regained his sanity and will probably be on the enemy’s side. His {Ultra Healing} is at least level two. I’ll share info on its level-four power, but by that point not even burying him alive was enough to kill him, so you don’t need to worry about that. Fight to kill, and really, if you do manage to take him out, that’s a win for the world. No need to care about a monster that doesn’t care about murder.”

“Oh yeah, he did kill the king of Daide. {Ultra Healing}... I don’t mind killing, but if he heals the moment I cut into him, there’s not much I can do.”

Wataru’s general attacking style was sword slices. They definitely didn’t have a high compatibility.

“Mm... I’ll think of something. Wataru, you plan around what to do if you have to fight one of the braves, and I guess practice cutting off Haku’s leg.”

“Right. Let’s do this, Keima. Though, er... I do feel weird about practicing amputating someone’s leg,” Wataru said, scratching his head.

“The fate of this plan rests on you, my friend.”

“That’s a lot of pressure... You WILL be backing me up, right?”

That wasn’t even a joke. If this surprise attack failed, then it wouldn’t be odd for Haku (Core 10) to run away. We were dealing with a Dungeon Core in their own territory, after all, which meant she could place herself anywhere.

And so, in no time it was go time. We all gathered in a room of the Beddhist church. Supposedly we would be {Teleporting} from here, with our attackers being me, Wataru, and Igni. Those seeing us off (under the guise of being teleporters) were Neruneh, the nuns, and Core 219.

“Everyone ready?”

“Yep. Perfect,” Wataru said, nodding. “But... Why is Igni on the attack force?!”

“C’mon, Wataru! You don’t need to be shy!” Igni exclaimed, clinging to him. She was pushing her body against him as if to say, “Yeah, I know my chest’s touching you,” but it unfortunately didn’t seem to be having much of an effect. Squishy loli bodies meant nothing to Wataru.

“I see Igni sure likes yooou, Wataruuu.”

“Er, no, this is all a big mistake, Neruneh!”

“It’s not a mistake! Wataru’s gonna be my mate!” Igni barked, baring her teeth at Neruneh with a hiss. Dragon or no, in a battle of love everything rested on the scales of Wataru’s heart, and Igni understood just how much of a threat Neruneh was; she was going all out in a display of charm to fight back.

I had invited her to help in this fight, but when I showed her Wataru on the monitor to try and convince her to join, he just happened to be going ga-ga over Neruneh at their meal date. That in turn actually led to Igni being tempted to come, and her primary payment would essentially be my letting her tag along in the first place. I also sent alcohol and chili paste to Ittetsu.

“She’ll provide some key combat support. I guarantee it.”

“That’s right! He guarantees it!”

After all, she was a Flame Dragon. I took the opportunity to invite Redra, too, but she declined, saying “What kinda parent would bust their daughter’s date like that?!” This wasn’t a date, it was actually a highly critical final battle, but the perspective of Dragons was not dissimilar to the Demon Realm’s. Well, in the end I was at least grateful to have Igni.

“Oh yeah, she’s a Dragonute or something, right? Is she strong?”

“Huh? Oh, I get it. That’s what they told you. No, I’m an actual Dragon!” Igni said, glaring daggers at Neruneh.

“Er, should you be telling him that, Igni?”

“It’s fine! So, Wataru, did you fall in love with me all over again?! I’m way stronger than that pair of walking boobs!”

Apparently this was what Igni thought would give her success; the strong are beloved. That definitely would have worked in the Demon Realm, but unfortunately this was the empire, and Wataru had Japanese aesthetics. It ain’t gonna work, Igni.

“You’re really gonna reveal it now of all times...? Well, whatever. Guess it is important for everyone to know Igni’s strength.”

“Wha? A... A Dragon...?” Wataru mumbled, confused. I took the liberty of explaining.

“Aah, well. Remember the Flame Dragon we got rid of before? That was actually her.”

“WHAAAT?!”

“Eheheh.”

Igni scratched her head shyly as Wataru balked. Sheesh, she sure didn’t give me any time to prepare for this.

“Wataruuu. That was my first time, you know...?”

“Er, what? Sorry, but what do you mean? Er? Didn’t you go to another mountain or something...?”

“We played board games right after, remember? I came right back.”

Wataru nodded, thinking back to that.

“Right, right... Wait, I remember. I proposed to your ancestor, but uh, you mean...”

“That’s right. You proposed to someone, and with them right there, said you didn’t actually mean to.”

“That hurt real bad, Wataru...! But you’re the only one to ever make me feel this way! No more hiding things, and I’m not holding back!!!”

“Ow ow ow ow?! My bones are gonna break, my bones! Aaah, don’t hug so hard!”

“Wooow, Igni is so passionatee. You’re a lucky maaan, Wataruuu.”

“Is that really how you should be reacting to this, Neruneh?!”

Alright, I should put a stop to this before Wataru has his hips crushed and our own plan is ruined.

“Perhaps I should grant these adorable young ladies a flower myself?” Core 219 asked, pinning flowers into our chests. *You say “young ladies,” but two of us are guys. You wouldn’t be counting me as a girl to raise the average, would you?*

“Sieg, what’s this?” Wataru asked.

“My familiar, tele-flower. It can use telepathy, so it’s perfect for sending orders back and forth,” Core 219 said, playing the part of a plant-based summoner. This would let us get info from the moss security cameras in the ivory villa, and Core 219 could create diversions to match the start of Wataru’s ambush.

“(So? Can you hear?)” Core 219 asked through the flower.

“Ah, yes. Loud and clear, Sieg.”

“(Good, then go and do your best. Information shall flow from me to you like the wind.)”

With a method of communication secured, our ambush plan finally began.

Anyway, they thought I was dead, and the plan was for me to get in Wataru's {Storage} while disguised via {Ultra Transformation}. Now, I could use magic perfectly when transformed as myself, but that wouldn't work as a disguise. So in other words... I really only had one choice. Sigh...

Wataru's Perspective

After Neruneh and everyone saw the group off with smiles, Keima put Wataru into {Storage} with Igni grappling his side, and then an instant later they were on the side of a paved road at the imperial city outskirts.

"That really did feel like it only took a second... Wait, who are you?!" Wataru turned and saw not Keima, but a black-haired woman behind him.

"Wowies, what a surprise! Uncle, what're you doing?"

"You can tell it's me, huh, Igni? Well, just think of this as a disguise. I didn't want to dress up like this myself, but they think I'm dead, so..." the woman—Keima—trailed off. On closer inspection, she certainly was wearing his clothes, and her face resembled his as well. They looked similar enough that Wataru would have believed it was Keima's little sister.

"How do you even do this? You sound and look exactly like a girl, and that's being generous with assuming that's padding on your chest." Wataru poked her chest and felt a squish. It was soft.

"You know the sex-changing magic potion? Yeah. Also, it's not padding, so don't poke. I couldn't wear any chest armor ahead of time due to the potion changing my size too much."

"Er, sorry?!"

"Grrr, Wataru! If you want to do that, do it to me!" Igni growled, rubbing her body on him, but that was like a puppy trying to mark something, so it was more heartwarming than anything.

"(So, Wataru? My little sister is wonderfully adorable, no?)" came Sieg's voice through telepathy. By little sister, she must have meant Keima.

"Erm... Why go so far as to turn into a girl just for a disguise?"

"I didn't want to, but there's a reason I need to use this form. I'd appreciate you not digging too deep."

"(It was necessary for casting magic or some such, my dear Wataru. Do protect her.)"

"Er, right."

Keima looked a bit tired. There was the exhaustion from

{Teleportation}, surely, but cross-dressing... or rather, turning into a girl really showed just how important this mission was.

“Alright, swapping time, Wataru.”

“Yay! Now we go into Wataru’s {Storage}!!!”

Indeed, it was Wataru’s turn to put the two of them into {Storage}. Due to the guards at the city gates, Wataru needed to hide them away before going there himself.

“Right. Assume that the surprise attack failed, and come out ready to fight. If it succeeds, I’ll take you two out somewhere safe and big.”

“Eh? Should I go Dragon mode then?”

“Uh, Igni. You wouldn’t fit into {Storage} that way. Plus, you would crush me.”

“Right! You’re smart, uncle! Okay, going in first!” Igni exclaimed, leaping toward the {Storage}. Wataru would be taking Keima and Igni out of {Storage} after attacking Haku, at the very least. They would either emerge in the middle of a battle or have the wind completely taken out of their sails.

“Let’s hope it’s their sails,” Keima said.

“I wanna fight! I wanna show Wataru my good side!”

And so, they went into {Storage}, and Wataru went to the imperial city gates.

Upon arriving, one of the regular guards called out to him. “Oh? If it isn’t Wataru. I thought the schedule was for you to come back half a month from now; did something happen?”

“Yep. An urgent problem has come up. I’ll need to talk to Lady Haku directly, if you would make the arrangements for that.”

“Ah! Understood!”

After the soldier ran off, Wataru sighed, wondering if he had given the proper sense of urgency. If things went well, he would have an audience with Haku within two hours. The thought of actually cutting her leg off naturally filled him with anxiety. He thought about how if the guard just never came back he wouldn’t need to turn his blade against the person he owed so much, but at the same time it was precisely because he owed Haku so much that he had to do this. Wataru stared at the ceiling.

He sat in a chair while waiting to calm himself, and then before long the guard returned.

“Wataru. Lady Haku has instructed you to come to the villa at once. Shall I prepare a horse?”

“Nah, it’d be faster for me to run. See you,” Wataru said, then passed through the gate. He ran to the castle, then went to the villa. The guards at the castle gate had been informed, and he was let in on sight.

“(Wataru. Could you spread the seeds here?)” Core 219 asked

through telepathy while he was walking to the villa.

“Oh, I almost forgot.”

The seeds referred to the planned diversion—they were literally plant seeds Sieg had given him. Wataru stuck his hand into his pocket and, feigning naturality, pulled out a handkerchief while spilling seeds on the ground. They were as small as flower seeds, but each would become a Plant Soldier. It was the kind of thing that once you saw it, you would stop believing in the law of conservation of energy.

Wataru sped along, impressed by the power of summoning magic, only to cross paths with someone he knew. But it wasn't just any old acquaintance. It was Haku's subordinate, and one of the Four Braves: Sally.

“Oh, if it isn't Wataru. What might you be doing here? I believe you were scheduled to come back later.”

“Right back at you. What about your knight's order work?”

“There was a change of plans after you left. I've been ordered to guard the villa now.”

As she was the primary commander of the knights, it felt like assigning her to guard the villa was an incredible waste, but Wataru understood it as being connected to the state Haku was in.

“(I expect she is surrounding herself with those she can trust. This is another level of being on guard.)” Sieg said through telepathy. Wataru agreed silently. All that said, Sally was a powerhouse and one of the few in the empire who could wrangle with Wataru. As someone about to spring an ambush, her presence here put a lot of pressure on him.

“Oh, I see. Well, I have to give Lady Haku a report, so if you'll excuse me.”

“Hm. Not answering my question, then?”

“Er, well, you know,” Wataru stammered. At times like this he really wished he could talk off the cuff like Keima could.

“I ran as hard as I could while thinking of it as a good way to train, and ended up finishing a lot sooner than usual.”

“I see. That is wonderful to hear,” Sally said, smiling despite the fact it was a truly terrible excuse. “The report said you had an urgent message for Lady Haku, though?”

“That's right. I also ran so fast because I had urgent news!”

Wataru began faltering. Obviously as a bodyguard she would have received word from the guard; why didn't he think of that?

“Urgent news from you surely is not a good sign. I will go as well. A problem you cannot solve will likely be the job of a knight's order, so this will accelerate things.”

Wataru broke out into a cold sweat on the inside. If Sally were there to guard Haku during the ambush, its chances of success would

plummet. He had to turn her down somehow.

“(Ah, Wataru,)” Sieg said through telepathy. “(Simply say you came across the wanted marriage fraud scam artist. What was their name again?)”

“E-Erm. The truth is, I recently saw the marriage fraud scam artist, Pamella,” Wataru said.

“Ah! Um, Pamella? As in, Pamella Zan?”

“Er... Yes? I’m one of her victims, so... you know.”

“Oh yes, I understand. I just remembered some urgent business, so if you’ll excuse me,” Sally said, striding away while looking suddenly panicked.

“(That’s an {Ultra Good Fortune} Hero for you. You’re lucky. That wouldn’t have worked on any of the others,)” Sieg said through telepathy, cackling. Wataru blinked.

“Am I missing something?”

“(Oh, it just so happens the man who tricked you is our little Sally’s lover. For such a rule-loving woman, she certainly has a taste for bad men,)” Sieg replied. It seemed she was sheltering the wanted criminal Pamella with Haku’s silent approval. It was surprising to hear that a knight commander was hiding criminals. At the same time, it made Wataru remember his painful past.

“I had no idea... It has Lady Haku’s silent approval? Even though he’s a wanted criminal?”

“(Indeed. Sally knows this not, but Pamella is a member of the empire’s spy division. The idea here is to avoid a legitimately bad man from the street winning the knight commander’s heart, which would be no difficult feat.)”

“What...?”

“(Oho. This is top-secret information, understand. I learned it only by chance.)”

Wataru stiffened. Pamella was a scam artist that had once encouraged Wataru, made him fall in love with “her,” and then stolen all his savings. If that Pamella were actually an imperial spy, well, that would change a lot of things, wouldn’t it?

“(In any case, let us hurry. Before Sally notices your lie, that is.)”

“R-Right. Let’s go.”

Thinking about that could wait. Attacking—or rather, rescuing Haku came first. He shook his head and hurried to the audience chambers.

And so he arrived. Haku was sitting on a throne atop three steps. Dolce was standing in front of the bottom step. The position was such that Wataru would be giving a report on one knee about ten meters away on the ground. Due to the fact she was sitting, he couldn’t see the accessory on her thigh. It was a position that made it hard to

ambush her, in many ways.

“So, Wataru the Hero. What is your report?” Haku intoned.

“Er, well. Where is Chloe?”

“Chloe... Ah, Chloe is on a work trip at the moment.”

It was normally Chloe standing where Dolce stood. And her duty was to serve as Haku’s bodyguard and butler. It was unthinkable for her to have any job that involved leaving Haku’s side.

“(She was likely disposed of. That butler was primarily a guard against psychological attack... Though, well, perhaps she is still fighting on the inside,)” Sieg said. Wataru prayed she was still alive.

“Hurry with your report. I do not have all day.”

“Right. May I step closer, as it is a confidential matter not to be spoken of openly?”

“No; give your report there,” Haku said, forestalling him from coming closer.

“(On guard, as expected. Remember what we discussed, Wataru?)”

Right. This was all according to plan.

“Is something wrong, Lady Haku? U-Usually you would ask me to whisper it into your ear,” Wataru said, repeating the fairly suspicious-sounding line he had practiced with Sieg. He bit his tongue a bit. If this let him get closer to Haku, great. If not, there were other lines they had prepared.

“Ah, yes, indeed. You may come a bit closer, then.”

“As you wish, Lady Haku,” Wataru said. Luckily, he had gotten a favorable response. He approached Haku, and stopped at the stairway.

“Erm, could you come this way, Lady Haku?”

“Could you not simply just climb the stairway?”

“Absolutely not! The only ones who may climb these steps are the divine and their guards. Even with your permission, it is above my stature!” Wataru exclaimed, using knowledge of imperial customs Sieg had taught him. In reality, there had never been any opportunity for him to climb the stairway regardless. Though as a Hero with a noble title, Wataru could actually climb up two of the stairs.

“Please show my lost mercy, my most honorable Lady Haku,” Wataru intoned, spreading his hands wide. His acting had been directed by none other than Sieg. Dolce watched on with a narrowed gaze. She glared, but did nothing.

“...Very well,” Haku said, standing up from the throne. All according to plan.

The accessory became visible on her thigh. An instant later, Wataru’s Holy Blade Air had sliced straight across her thigh, just barely above it.

“Ah! {Hea—}!”

“(Kick it off! Wataru!)”

“Hyaaaaah!”

Wataru kicked as planned before Haku could cast Restoration magic... Yet her leg had already completely healed, and took Wataru’s kick normally. The healing rate was absurd.

“Ngh, you brat! How dare you attack me like that?! Dolce, Suzuki, take him down!” Haku barked, sitting back on her throne while wavering. Dolce slid in front of her. And then, from behind her shadow, came the half-dyed blond head of a thuggish Hero... Suzuki.

“{Storage}!”

The surprise attack had failed. Next up was a full-frontal attack. Wataru took Keima and Igni out of {Storage}.

“Sorry! It didn’t work!”

“Too bad, looks like it’s work time!” Keima said (in his girl form, which Wataru still wasn’t used to), then began blasting beams of light without chants. A high-level spell that seemed to be barely keeping its mana together pierced Suzuki’s chest and headed to Haku. It was aimed brilliantly at her thigh, but Dolce silently got in between them and knocked the mana to the wall.

“Graaah!”

“Tch, missed. Suzuki seems pretty insane, too,” Keima commented.

Suzuki wasn’t in a state of fear; he was in a berserk state. His wild and aggressive movements were fit for a berserker. The hole in his chest closed instantly, and he charged forward without a sword, only for Igni to grab both his hands like a sumo wrestler and stop him. She crushed his hands within hers, but Suzuki’s hands healed instantly and he maintained his struggle.

“What the?! Uncle, this guy’s pretty strong!”

“GRAAAH! AAAAAH!”

“Keep stalling him. Don’t bite him, he might attack you from inside your stomach.”

“Eep?! Got it! I don’t want that!!!”

Keima kept blasting light-magic spells without chants while giving calculated directions, keeping Dolce pinned down. The series of lasers, all of which avoided Igni and Suzuki, were like a Gatling gun, and naturally even Dolce had to stand in place to defend against them. Good grief—Keima was looking and acting so different from his usual lazy self, you could almost fall in love with her.

“Don’t doze off, Wataru! Keep attacking!”

“Ah, but Haku’s leg reattached right after I cut it. What should I do?”

“It looks like she powered up Suzuki, so that might have to do with {Ultra Healing}. Maybe it starts healing people around him, or at

least his allies, too?" Keima said, dissecting the situation. "Pull the leg away while cutting it. Then hide it in {Storage}! We just need to get rid of the leg accessory!"

"Ah, right!"

Wataru leapt to follow Keima's instructions, jumping over Dolce and approaching Haku. It was easier to aim for the thigh from above when she was sitting. Wataru swung his Holy Blade again, prepared to cut even the throne in half...

"(Amelia's coming from above! Look out!)"

Sieg's warning and the killing intent coming from above led Wataru to twist his body forcibly to dodge. Where he once stood fell a spear-like lightning.

"Oh, you dodged it."

"Amelia! Please don't interfere!"

"Oh, but I will, with anyone who intends to harm Lady Haku," Amelia said, appearing from the ceiling like a snake... Well, her lower half actually was a snake.

"Wha, what?! A Lamia?! Amelia's turned into a Lamia?! Body modification?!"

"Calm down, she's always been like this."

This all was very shocking for Wataru, but judging by Keima's reaction she really had always been like this. She must have been from the Demon Realm.

"Oh? You must be quite the spy to have known my secret. Who might you be serving?"

"Who knows? Summon Kobold!"

Keima threw a Kobold at Amelia while keeping Dolce pinned. It looked like he just took it out of {Storage} rather than summoning it, but that was probably just Wataru's imagination. Either way, it must have taken fearsome mana control to use two spells at once. And the fact he was shooting out such an advanced spell nonstop really made one question his mana capacity.

As expected, Keima had been hiding his true power... Or maybe he just had a restriction where he could only use it when in that female form? Wait... Maybe this was his true form? Wataru decided not to think about that. He needed to focus on cutting off Haku's leg.

"A mere Kobold... Ah, what the?! It's so strong!"

"Woof!"

It dodged Amelia's spear and bore down on her with skill unfathomable for a normal Kobold. The Kobold wielded two knives and stood in a familiar battle stance. Keima provided some magic support, but Amelia dodged it despite her massive tail.

"How troublesome...! Those would hurt my scales!"

Wataru made his move while Amelia was fighting with her tail

and spear. He attacked Haku again, and—

“Tch!”

This time Haku swung a staff to deflect it. Right—Haku was an A-Rank adventurer herself. Even when sitting and even when possessed, her power was still in full force.

“Sally, what are you doing?! Come...! An attack?! Gah, you lot plotted this out!” Haku screamed, apparently contacting Sally from afar. Her tone was entirely that of an old man. And judging by what she said, Sieg was succeeding in stalling Sally.

“Igني, hold Suzuki—{Rock Bind}!” Keima shouted. An instant later, the carpet on the ground burst apart, and the rock paving twisted like tentacles which wrapped around Suzuki. They enveloped his legs, torso, and arms without a bit of leeway, then locked into place.

“Ngha, gaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” roared Suzuki, clear fear in his voice after his face was covered. Igني stepped back, and soon he was entirely covered. Thoroughly, carefully, like a spider weaving a cocoon.

“Now it’s three versus four! Give it up, former pope!”

“What?! How do you know that... Wait, that magic... You work for Narikin!”

Igني joined the attacks on Haku.

“Amelia, how are you struggling so much with a single Kobold?! Useless!”

“M-My sincerest apologies!”

“Enough already! Sally, replace!” Haku declared, and in an instant Sally appeared where she had not been. She was in full armor, and completely ready for battle. And she appeared such that her body conveniently blocked Wataru’s blow.

Clink! Wataru’s Holy Blade slammed into Sally’s armor.

“Ngh?! Wataru, what is the meaning of this?! How dare you turn your blade on Lady Haku!”

“Sally, don’t you realize something is wrong with her?! She’s being brainwashed or something!”

“So what?!”

Sally deflected Air away with her blade. It was a Magic Blade on the same level as Air. Keima interjected just as Wataru was about to be hit by the follow-up, putting himself in the way.

“Ngh! I feel that a little...!”

“Ah, the Divine Quilt?! Clever girl!”

In a surprising twist, Keima had stepped forward to take the blow in Wataru’s place. The Kobold then launched a follow-up attack to distract her. Sally did a horizontal slice which cut the Kobold in two. Keima used that time to back off, holding Amelia and Sally down with light beams while taking another Kobold out of {Storage}.

“Sorry, and thank you! Does this mean Sally and the others have been taken over, too?!”

“Don’t panic, I told you we’d probably have to face the Four Braves, too.”

Sally, unlike the scout Amelia, was a full-frontal fighter. In terms of sword fighting alone, she was superior to Wataru. The difference in skill was such that she was stronger than him even while fending off Igni.

“(Apologies, Sally got away. She killed my main attacker before leaving, so it’s taking all I have just to fend off the soldiers.)”

“Roger. This is... rough. Wataru, think we can do it?”

“Honestly, it’ll be hard. Sally’s the killer here... I just don’t see us beating her.”

A cold sweat ran down Wataru’s back. And that was when it happened. It suddenly felt like the temperature of the entire room dropped by two degrees.

“(Get down!)” shouted Sieg. Wataru instinctively squatted.

An instant later, the entire room was split in half.

“Whoa!”

“Eep?!”

Keima and Igni were both safe. Haku’s group, on the other hand, had received no warning, and got hit directly. Amelia’s tail was separated from her torso, and Sally’s, for some reason empty, armor clattered to the ground. Dolce was safe, but a line of blood seeped out of her torso, then she fell backward with the throne.

“Amelia?! Sally?! I’ll recover you now!”

“Ngh... What was that?!”

Judging by the scars of the cut, it had come from the back of the room and went to the front.

“Sorry to barge in, but I came to take sweet little Haku back, okay?” came a voice. Standing at the origin point of the slash was a black-haired, red-eyed nun wielding a Japanese katana that radiated an evil aura.

“You?! You’re alive?!”

“Bleh, Leona?!”

“Oh my. The two of you certainly look cute now, mm.”

Apparently the nun was someone familiar both to Keima and whoever had taken Haku over.



“I don’t know who you are, but take Haku’s leg off! The accessory on her leg is the culprit! Cut it off or break it!”

“Thank you for the wondrous advice,” said Leona the mysterious nun, giving Wataru a gentle smile before rushing Haku down with her katana held in a single hand.

“I shan’t let you! Ultra magic, activate—{Enchant Route: D}!”

“Ultra magic, activate—{Enchant Route: 3M}.”

A spherical arrangement of magical glyphs floated out of Haku and Leona. Wataru hadn’t seen magic like that before. He didn’t know what it was, but he could feel their incredible power.

“Why do you know this magic?! {Force Gravity}!”

“{Force Levitation}! Aha! I’ve already finished experimenting with it, old man 10!”

Leona lifted her katana, canceling out the gravity manipulation as if it were nothing. She dropped it down on Haku, this time splitting the room vertically. But Haku had vanished from the throne. Wings of light had sprouted from her back, and she flew to avoid it.

“Oh? Those are Angel wings.”

“That’s right! I obtained the God of Light’s power! You have no hope of winning, so crawl back to your grave!”

“You’re the one who should be crawling back to your grave, Mr. Undead. {Force Purification}.”

“Ngh, you brat! {Force Drain}!”

“{Force Barrier}. I had the God of Light’s power to begin with. Should you really be bragging about it?”

The shock waves of their unreal power were vibrating through the room. Wataru got mana sickness just from the reverberations and felt sick enough to hurl. He looked to see if Keima was okay, and while she was grimacing pretty hard, not only was she safe, she was even standing in front of Wataru and Igmi to shield them from the worst of it. The Kobold was squeezed in, too.

“Are you two okay?”

“Y-Yeah. I’m surprised you can take that.”

“This is even making me a little sick... Uncle, how are you okay?”

“I’ve got some good equipment on.”

Even with that in mind, she truly was reliable, Wataru concluded.

“W-Wataru?! Don’t fall in love with Uncle, okay?! Look at me!”

“Er, wh-what? I’m not falling in love!”

He had Neruneh, after all. Though it was a teensy bit dangerous for a second there.

“{Force}... Gah! Ngh, until I master control of this body, I’m at a disadvantage...!” Haku ceased casting spells to cough up blood. Leona speedily swung her katana.

“{Spacetime Slash}!”

“Tch! Temporary retreat! Replace!”

An instant later, Haku’s group abruptly vanished, dodging Leona’s attack. The ruined throne room was left with only Wataru’s group, Leona, and blood. Suzuki had similarly vanished from the rock.

Leona lowered her katana and sighed. She sheathed it with a smooth movement.

“Whew, finished in less than three minutes,” she said. The power from before had vanished, and the pressure in the air lessened. Still, Wataru could tell at a glance this girl was a powerhouse. Though nobody would have mistaken her as weak after seeing that fight.

“You saved us... Er, you did, right?” Wataru asked Leona, hesitantly. It wasn’t hard to imagine they would have lost that fight if it continued. In particular, Haku would have dominated with that ultra magic or whatever. They would have lost without knowing what was happening.

“Yep, you were in a dangerous spot. Mr. Keima... Or rather, Miss Keima, you really owe me some words of gratitude. Eheheh... Or maybe I should just call you Kei... Kei... Kate? Kate.”

“Shut it, Leona. No nicknames. And why are you here? Didn’t you escape from your cell?” Keima grumbled, holding the Kobold back from attacking Leona.

“Oh my. Weren’t you the one to come to me, Keima? Not to mention, I’ve been waiting for my chance ever since the God of Darkness asked me for help.”

“I knew it! Gah! Curse it all!”

The fact that Leona responded to that with a smile gave Wataru the impression she was quite the friendly person indeed.

“Sorry,” Wataru said. “We failed to rescue Haku.”

“Don’t worry about it; I expected this much. Succeeding here would have been the best outcome... but I expected him to run.”

“Really?” Hearing that brightened Wataru’s mood. Keima predicting this meant he had a plan for what came next. In which case, there was no point in Wataru worrying about it.

“Keima, could you introduce me to this person? I’m pretty curious about that fight that just happened, and the katana.”

“My, my, my. Now, how will Keima introduce me, I wonder? Ahaha.”

Keima fell into a displeased silence. He really didn’t seem to like this Leona girl.

After a while, Keima begrudgingly spoke. “...This is Leona, the God of Chaos. That makes her an evil god, so don’t let your guard down around her.”

“Tch tch. I would rather you call me a ‘reliable helper.’”

The God of Chaos. Upon hearing that, Wataru concluded she was one of Keima's many weird friends, and left it at that.

* * *

The attack on the Ivory Villa: Haku (Core 10) had a shmup battle with Leona, then fled. It was an otherworldly fight just like you would expect from a duel between two First Lot Cores.

In any case, Leona was apparently a helper this time, so I put away the Kobold (Niku).

"Still, to think the God of Darkness asked you for help of all people... I thought it was just Wataru."

"It was me who gave a divine revelation to Mr. Hero here, you know. Though I was merely passing on a message from the God of Darkness," Leona said with a smile.

C'mon, God of Darkness, don't be lazy.

"Wha?! But I was sure that was the same god that welcomed me to this world..."

"You can copy that guy easy, just shine so bright nobody can tell what you look like. Especially in dreams," she replied. Apparently Leona had mimicked the God of Light and appeared inside Wataru's dream. All that, to convey a message from the God of Darkness?

"Are you a Succubus or something? You have skills to mess with dreams, too?"

"Hey, all I did was use my Divine Blanket, okay? After all, some mysterious force was working to stop us from meeting. So much so I didn't even know he existed until the God of Darkness told me."

Ah yeah, that would be the {Ultra Good Fortune} hard at work. Until the God of Darkness interfered as an even higher being. Also... The Divine Blanket can do that, too? We have one ourselves, but I didn't know about that.

"So wait, you were the god, Leona?!"

"Correct. We were like twins, weren't we?"

"And you knowing what he looks like means... You came from Japan, too?!"

"Might want to save that discussion for later, after we evacuate—{Air Burst}."

The Ivory Villa had been torn to pieces by the reverberations from the fight. Leona whipped her hand and blew away a chunk of the ceiling that had come falling our way.

"(Heya. Shall I guide you down a safe path to escape?)"

"Oh yeah, please do."

With guidance from Core 219, we evacuated through an escape route built into the underground. It was like a labyrinth, and reminded me once again that this villa was also a dungeon.

We followed Core 219's guidance and got outside, climbing up a well within the imperial capital. There was a blue sky, and white clouds. It was the kind of scenery that would make you want to comment on the dazzling sun... But not that much time had actually passed since we were inside.

"What's our next move?" Leona asked. "Since we're here, how about coming to my place?"

"What, you have a house in the imperial capital? Er... It's not the cell from before, right?"

"Just what do you think I am, sweet Keima? Ever heard of the Hero Workshop? I made the place, or rather, the whole company."

The Hero Workshop, supplier of magic tool goods. Apparently the "Hero" part referred to Leona. It made way too much sense that their overly advanced technology came from a God of Chaos ruling over alchemy.

"So that was your workshop, huh...?"

"Oh man! I use your Mr. Eternal Pens constantly!"

"Thank you, thank you."

Leona accepted Wataru's motion for a handshake. Incidentally, Wataru didn't use the Mr. Heating Pot since he had our hotplates from the dungeon. Neruneh was giving them to him as a present (with charge).

"So, coming to my place or not?"

"Oh, my place is here, too," Wataru said. "I am a Hero of the empire, after all!"

"No to both. We're getting the hell out of here. Who knows where spies might be?"

We were dealing with Haku here. Core 10's grasp on her memories seemed floaty, and he didn't have a complete grasp on us, but we had already turned the Four Braves against us.

"Aaah! There you are!" came a call. We turned and saw Misha the War Cat, a member of the Four Braves and the guildmaster of the imperial Adventurer's Guild. Speak of the devil. Not that I had spoken of her.

"Geh, it's Misha!"

"Hm? Who the heck're you, miss? But anyway, Wataru, you gotta get out of here! Lady Haku's gone nuts, and the whole imperial capital's not safe! You need to get help from Goren... Or really, everywhere! I use my authority as guildmaster to meowke this your highest priority!"

"Er, uh, Misha?" Wataru stumbled as Misha busily prodded him to run away. Something was weird about her, or rather, not weird. Putting aside whether it was just an act, she was clearly sane. Wataru was struggling to decide whether he should draw his sword or not.

“Hey! Get away from Wataru!” Igni barked.

“Huuuh? Got a problem, ya little brat?! Don’t interrupt! THIS IS A REAL-DEAL CONVO, MEOW!”

“Eep?!” Igni hid behind Wataru. Not bad, Misha; making Igni hide was no small feat.

“Erm, are you actually fine, Misha?” Wataru asked hesitantly, his hand on his sword hilt.

“Mm? Seems like you’ve already had a clash... Don’t worry, I’m fine. She hasn’t let me go near the villa for a while meow,” Misha said, shrugging.

“Hmm? Misha, you’re actually sane?” I asked.

“Who even *are* mew? Quit actin’ all buddy-buddy... Hold on, sniff, sniff, sniff... Keima?! I dunno why you’re a girl now, but good! You gotta save Lady Haku, fast!”

Yo, this cat just sniffed me out.

“Leona, do you know what’s going on? Seems like Misha’s still sane somehow.”

“Uh-huh. Misha’s fine, ’cause she’s actually from the Demon Realm.”

“Wait, Leona?! What’d you do to Lady Haku?! PSHAAAAAH!”

Misha must not have seen her before, because only now did she turn to her and hiss threateningly.

“She’s from the Demon Realm?” I asked.

“You know, the classic strat of trading subordinates in case something happens. It’s a big help precisely in cases like this,” Leona said, wording it indirectly so Wataru wouldn’t understand what was actually being said.

“Why do mew know that, Leona?! It’s top secret!” Misha exclaimed.

“I mean, Haku told me, obviously.”

“Curse you, Leona! Just what kind of torture did you put Lady Haku through?!”

“How rude, it was a friendly chat across bars. I’m good friends with Haku, y’know—{Teleport},” Leona suddenly chanted, wrapping all of us and Misha into a teleport outside the city. “There, Miss Keima, we’re outside. What now?”

“Ngh, trying to kidnap me?!”

“Hold on, Misha. Leona’s on our side this time. She’s a helper from the God of Darkness.”

“Abwuh? Ummm...”

“Seems like we have a lot of things to talk about. Let’s all share what we know. Ehhh... Luckily, the [Rabbit Rest Spot] is nearby, so we can talk on our way there.”

Thus, we elected to talk to Misha on our way to Mikan’s dungeon

near the imperial capital.

“So basically, you’re not our enemy, Misha?”

“Nyahaha. Really, I’m just surprised Leona’s not a baddy this time, even if it’s just this once, meow.”

We talked on our way to the [Rabbit Rest Spot]. We had Wataru, Igni, and Leona step away a bit so we could talk on the down-low, and thanks to that I confirmed Misha was on our side.

Luckily, Misha remained a nap-loving, friendly cat. She was actually the twelfth monster to go by the name of Misha, was spawned by the Great Demon King (also known as Core 6), and was raised in the empire, so she didn’t know too much about the Demon Realm... Though none of that had anything to do with our current problem.

“I see. You’re going around like that since Dolce killed mew.”

“Yep. All of the Four Braves except you are our enemies. Though I don’t know about Chloe.”

“Chloe’s a bodyguard, and is super resistant to brainwashing. She probably died first, meow...? Well, if we get Lady Haku back to her senses we can revive her, so I’m sure she’ll be fine.”

It sure was nice working for a dungeon. You could revive your allies even when they died.

“So, how do we save Lady Haku, meow?”

“Well, I guess the basic strategy would be conquering the [Ivory Labyrinth] before the time limit.”

“Uh-huh, that’s gonna be purretty rough. If this possessor guy can use all of the dungeon functions, he can mess with the dungeon and escape forever. Do mew know how long it’ll take to get to the furthest point currently reached, Floor 53? We’re talking about year-long journeys here.”

Misha was pretty well informed on this stuff thanks to being the guildmaster of the imperial capital’s Adventurer’s Guild.

“But that’s for normal adventurers. I’m guessing mew have some kinda plot, Keima? After all, you’re a man who can end Dungeon Battles in one day... Or wait, I guess you’re a woman now! Nyahahahaha!”

“Hahaha, want me to turn you into a man?”

“If you do, I’ll make you have my babies, Keima. *Meow.*”

Crap, she’s good at dirty talk like this. As I should have expected from the top dog of adventurers.

“So, what plot’re you cooking up?”

“An all-out war. There’ll be a Dungeon Battle, too.”

“I knew it, a Dungeon Battle. But, well, I’m still the imperial capital’s guildmaster. Leave closing up the [Ivory Labyrinth] to me... Wait, *too*? You’re gonna do something else, meow?”

“Of course.”

Indeed. The Dungeon Battle would be just one part of the all-out war.

“As for the details, we’ll talk with Rokuko and the others. I went ahead and called them to the [Rabbit Rest Spot].”

The problem was how much to reveal to Wataru.

“Rokuko’s coming, too, meow? Can’t wait to see what strats you’ve cooked up, meow.”

“Naturally, I’ll be asking for your full support as imperial guildmaster, Misha.”

“Now I’ve a purretty bad feeling about this. Are naps gonna be banned for a while?”

Your bad feeling is exactly right, Misha.

We arrived at the [Rabbit Rest Spot]. We ignored the merchandise store that was as always perched by the entrance, and went into the dungeon. The Safe Zone grassy plains were right ahead, darkened due to night mode; it just so happened that the bunny-eared idol Ichigo was in the middle of a live show.

...And a familiar-looking blue-haired princess was pumping a glow stick in the front row.

“I SAY, ICHIGO IS THE CUTEEST! SHE IS THE MOST ADORABLE AND STRONGEST RABBITIIIT!”

“ICHIGOOOOO! GIVE US YOUR SOOOOCKS!”

What the absolute fuck?

“Wow, I heard the rumors, but this place sure is something else... Wait, is that Princess Mephy and Soto?”

“I’m here, too, Wataru,” came Rokuko’s voice from the side.

“Huh...? Weren’t you all in Goren...?”

“I called them over for strategizing,” I said. “Though Princess Mephy was probably just here by chance.”

There, Rokuko noticed Leona and furrowed her brows. “I heard you were here from Core 219, but somehow I didn’t want it to be true.”

“The God of Darkness gave me a personal request, and I want to save Haku, too. Our interests are aligned here.”

“Hrm, I’ll trust you this time, but just because of Father.”

It turned out that Father had sent her a mail once Leona and I made contact. Perhaps he felt it was fine since the surprise had been revealed.

“By the way, Keima, we’re going to be talking strategy, right? Should we have Wataru wait with Mephy here?” Rokuko asked.

“Nah... I’m gonna dump a bunch on Wataru, and have him go all out helping here.”

“What?! You’re finally going to tell me your secrets, Keima?!” Wataru exclaimed, more shocked than anyone. *Yeah, I had kinda been*

disrespectful to him until now.

“Though naturally, you’ll need to agree to being enchanted with contract magic to keep the secrets and not use them against us.”

“Of course. I trust you, Keima.”

“Oh, really? That’s consent, and seals the deal. {Treaty}.”

“Er—”

I casually activated the contract magic. Wataru balked, but it was too late. The whole thing about contract magic was that it activated once you had verbal consent. Now he couldn’t leak our secrets. And there was no expiration date to the contract, either.

“You let your guard down, Wataru. By the way, this contract doesn’t actually specify that I need to tell my secrets.”

“Whaaaat?! B-But you will, right?”

“Yeah, sure. I’m not that much of an ass.”

Wataru sighed in relief. Since he accepted the contract and all, it seemed right to consider him a part of the inner circle by this point.

“Alright. It’s not something to talk about in public, so let’s go to the staff-only backrooms. Oh, and Wataru? Final warning: once you hear this stuff, there’s no going back. You ready?”

“Yep. I steeled my resolve a long time ago,” Wataru said, with that resolve clear on his face. Alright, go time.

We went to the staff-only backrooms, where only those affiliated with the Dungeons were allowed in. Soto was enjoying Ichigo’s live show, so we left her with Emmymephy.

“Keima? It feels kind of like this place is only for staff and such.”

“Yeah, it’s fine. We’re staff and such.”

We kept walking down the hallway until it hit an abrupt dead end. I pushed in and spun a brick, which revealed a hidden passageway. Behind it was a paved hallway with doors. Each had a plate like “Break Room” or “Manager’s Office,” giving it a sort of office-building feel.

“This is a dungeon, right...? Not a hallway in a theater or something?”

“That’s right. Oh, I can cancel the disguise now.”

I ended {Ultra Transformation}. With that, I could finally be a dude again. I stretched and yawned, adjusting back to my normal body.

“Aw, what a shame. Miss Keima was so cute, too.”

“Agreed,” Rokuko said.

“(Absolutely. What a shame; if only she accepted her true, beautiful form.)”

I ignored the genuine disappointment of Leona, Rokuko, and Core 219 to enter the manager’s office, where we were welcomed by an orange-colored rabbit Core, Mikan.

“Keima, thanks for coming... Wait, this sure is a lot of visitors!” Mikan said.

“Yeah, sorry about that. We’ll need to borrow this room.”

“Sure, sure! Still, seems like Lady Haku’s in some big trouble...”

There was me, Rokuko, Wataru, Misha, Igni, and Leona. Even if you excluded Core 219, who was participating via telepathy, this was a pretty huge number.

“Number 564, could you bring some of the new carrot tea we invented for the guests?”

“If you insist. The sun will never set if we wait for you to make the tea,” Core 564 said, speedily getting to work on the tea. His dexterity with it showed that he was making tea every day. He skillfully poured several cups, then set them in front of us.

“It’s nothing much, but do enjo— Wait, YOOOU?! I-Is that not you, Mistress? How dare you show your face in front of me after all you did!”

“Hm? Ummm... Ummm? Who were you again?” Leona tilted her head.

“C’mon, don’t say you forgot. You were helping him out just recently.”

“Aaah! That experiment! I totally forgot. That’s right, I forgot you looked like this.”

“Ngh, meeting me here was the end of your luck... or so I’d like to say, but you are a visitor today! Enjoy the carrot tea!”

“Oh, thank you.”

Core 564 sure was being surprisingly mature there. On closer examination, his legs were shaking pretty hard. He was forcing himself, but I could hardly blame him. Really, the fact he could face her head-on and speak normally despite what she did to him was impressive. Core 564, I underestimated you.

Anyway, with all the arrangements made, it was time to talk about the current situation and our immediate plans.

“First of all, I expect that Haku’s hidden herself at the bottom of the [Ivory Labyrinth]. Thus, like I said to Misha before, we’ll be conquering the entire [Ivory Labyrinth]. The idea is to get all our forces capable of fighting her—that being in this case, Leona—in front of Haku, and then resolve things with that duel.”

“So, Keima, can we not just drag Haku out with one of Leona’s spells?” Rokuko suggested. I glanced Leona’s way.

“Good point. If we could do that, we wouldn’t need to go out of our way to conquer anything.”

“Not possible. They have ultra magic and equivalent Authority to me, so even if we do get her here, she’ll just run away again.”

“Right... Well, guess that locks us into conquering the dungeon,” I

said. Wataru raised a hand.

“By the bottom of the [Ivory Labyrinth], do we mean Floor 53, the lowest floor discovered? I’ve been there, but I have no idea how one could escape it in one go.”

“Errr, so, Keima. How mewch are we gonna tell him?” Misha asked while sipping carrot tea.

“At this point it’s annoying to keep track of what to hide and what not to, so just say whatever he needs to know. By bottom, we mean the actual bottom, which hasn’t been conquered yet. Haku controls the [Ivory Labyrinth] and can move within it freely. Also, the Four Braves are all monsters working for the dungeon, too.”

“Though I technically work for another dungeon, meow.”

Exceptions include: Misha. Got it.

“That’s a bit hard to believe, but it explains why Amelia was a Lamia. So Haku controls it?”

“(It would be accurate to say my fair lady is the dungeon itself. Naturally she would be able to do as she pleases within it,)” Core 219 added. Adding in Masters and the like would complicate the explanation, so we just left it as Haku being the controller.

“That’s why we need to conquer the [Ivory Labyrinth].”

“Technically speaking, the imperial capital is the top layer of the [Ivory Labyrinth], and all the nearby branch dungeons are also part of the [Ivory Labyrinth].”

Wataru could hardly hide his surprise. But it was the truth, so he had to accept it.

“I learned this in Dungeonology: ‘Dungeons are not evil. They are a gift from the gods, which produce infinite resources.’ And well... with Haku as the master, they certainly aren’t dangerous,” he said.

“Yep. Of course, each dungeon has their own head honcho in charge, and all the dungeons in the empire either work for Haku or are associated with her.”

“Yuppers! And I’m the boss of this [Rabbit Rest Spot]!” Mikan declared, fluffing himself up on the table.

“I was wondering why a rabbit was talking, but that explains that. So it’s possible to negotiate with dungeons... But wait, does that include the [Cave of Greed]?”

“Good eye. We’ll introduce you to the magical talking Golem, Mr. Uuma, later,” Rokuko said.

“Really?! Thank you, Rokuko!”

Yep, and she didn’t lie. It would be me, the Dungeon Master, inside him.

Anyway, moving on.

“Getting back to the point, now that Haku’s been taken over, we have to conquer the entirety of her dungeon. The question is how to

do this, but... I heard her say once that it's over a hundred and fifty floors. I don't know the actual bottom of the floor. Winning with just our numbers here would be difficult."

"Nuh-uh, Uncle! I could do it!" Igni declared.

"You're cheeky. Aren't you looking down on dungeons a little too meowch?" Misha asked, provocatively.

"It would be a problem if we went in with too few and she slipped away. If we want to save Haku, we can't risk destroying the dungeon itself."

Who knew how many months it would take if we formed a party with just this number and tried conquering the dungeon normally through honest means? Our time limit would run out, and if she ran around in the dungeon we'd never catch her.

"So what's your plan then, Keima? I won't be surprised, since I've been surprised enough today."

"It's simple, Wataru. If we can't do it alone, we just need to not do it alone. Remember what we did last time?"

"When fighting Number 50 in the Demon Realm, you mean?"

"Exactly," I replied.

But this time we were going after an entire dungeon, and getting three hits in wasn't enough. Thus...

"For this fight, we're going to wrap up... the entire world."

It was the plan for conquering the [Ivory Labyrinth] that I had been cooking up for years now. Put simply, I—all of us—would throw everything we had grown into this world into an all-out war. Magic, skills, items, dungeon powers. The strength I'd grown, the powers I'd revealed, the connections I'd made, the subordinates I'd gotten, the daughter I made... I'd use everything I could, and borrow everything I could, too. And then, with all the power I could muster, I would throw us all at the [Ivory Labyrinth].

"Well said, Keima. It *would* take the world to beat my sister!" Rokuko exclaimed.

"Mm... I love that side of you, Keima. I'm in," Leona said.

"(Oh, the scripts I can write based on this! How wonderful!)" Core 219 gushed.

"Am I helping, too? Mmm, I can at least send out squirrels!"

"At last, a place to wield my Ultra Death Scythe to its fullest potential!"

Rokuko and the other dungeons were into the idea. Core 564 slipped in, too.

"Sorry, Keima. I said I wouldn't be surprised, but... that was a lie."

"I don't really get it, but you're gonna be the strongest in the world! Wow, Uncle!"

Wataru raised both hands. Igni, I would have liked to think about

things a bit harder.

"Th-The whole what? The heck are mew thinking, Keima?" Misha gave me a fishy look.

"Er, sorry... Saying 'the whole world' might have been a bit of an exaggeration."

"R-Right. Don't surprise me like that, meow."

"It'll mainly be the empire, the Demon Realm, and the Holy Kingdom, plus Daide? Wakoku might get involved, too... Oh, and ideally everyone in her faction will help."

"That is purretty much the whole world!" Misha yelped.

"I'd like to take my time with preparations here, but I think we should have three days of planning, and three days for the actual conquering... Including today, that'll be about a week?"

"Errrm, so mew're going to conquer the [Ivory Labyrinth] in a week?"

"I guess that's the plan? Not sure how it'll go down in practice, though."

Misha cradled her head. *Hey, it's not my fault. There's a reason I only have three days to conquer it.*

"This is fuckin' crazy... Yeah, I swore! What the heck are we supposed to do, meow?!" Misha exclaimed.

"Well, first up is figuring out what the actual bottom floor of the [Ivory Labyrinth] is."

The discussion couldn't even begin if we didn't know how many floors we needed to conquer per day. Like, if it was actually a thousand floors or whatever, we'd be screwed before we began.

"Do you know how many floors there are, Misha?"

"Noppers. I never got map access, meow..."

Well, no surprise there, if she was from the Demon King faction.

"But the guild actually does have a map up to Floor 160, meow."

"Wait, what? Why?"

They have a map that far down when publicly the bottom floor is 53? Wait, the previous generation's Misha got tired of investigating whether every adventurer's report was correct, so she convinced Sally to copy down the map onto parchment, and made it so dungeon staff would compare those reports to the parchment map? That's so... so lazy! The information leakage!

"Still, that's a big help. Let us see it."

"Of course, meow. Though we still don't know how many floors there are past there," Misha said, scratching her cheek.

"No need to worry about that, I have someone who knows. Alright... Wataru. Time to roll the dice."

"Yeah, somehow I knew this was coming..."

Wataru took the ten-sided dice with an uneasy look. *Don't worry,*

you won't have to roll them that much this time.

Side Chapter — The Ivory Goddess

It was the day before the attack on the Ivory Villa.

By the time she noticed, it was already too late. Core 10 had infected her. She never thought he could do something like that despite his Core being destroyed.

“(Forgive me, my lady...)”

“(Good grief, this is certainly mud on my face.)”

Chloe was protecting Haku’s mind. That was what let her write a coded message while Core 10 was asleep, and convey the situation to Leona. At the moment she could not be trusted entirely, but they were once close enough to have made a system of codes together. It would be nice if their bond was still strong enough for Leona to save her. At least, that was her main hope. Haku’s dislike for Leona was one-sided, after all.

The dungeon’s subordinate monsters, aside from Chloe, were also infected by Core 10 through Haku. Chloe was safe as a Succubus, but one could not say how long that would last. Dolce the Wraith was hit with the infection head-on and got corrupted immediately. That was likely due to her having a high affinity with Core 10, as an undead monster.

“(It was truly painful to lose Dolce first. He stole so much private information... I wonder if Rokuko is well?)”

Rokuko’s [Cave of Greed]. It had leaked that her Dungeon Master Keima had been responsible for the Holy Kingdom infiltration, and that the {Ultra Regeneration} Hero Suzuki was stored there. Core 10 had sent Dolce off with orders to assassinate Keima and secure Suzuki. He would likely use Sorin... Ichika for that purpose.

“(I wonder if Keima will survive?)”

Well, she would worry about his dying if it happened. If he lived, hopefully he would notice something was off and come investigate. The [Ivory Beach] was no doubt being kept under watch, so Core 10 would react in some way to it.

“(Aaah, Core 10?! What are you doing to my lady’s body?! Stop it, you scum!)”

It seemed Core 10 was teasing Haku’s body in some way or another again.

“(Chloe, do calm down. If you stir, your defenses will soften... ngh!)”

“(M-My apologies! In this mental state, I could not contain my emotions...!)”

The infection advanced a bit further. Hence Core 10 understanding this method was effective and using it more often. Though because it would become his body once the infection completed, he could not do anything too crazy.

Eventually, Dolce returned from Goren. She couldn't use the [Ivory Beach] route on the way back after attacking, so she must have used {Teleportation}. Enough days had passed that it would have been possible with a huge quantity of mana potions. Haku listened in on the report.

“(...Hm, so Keima died),” Haku commented.

“(It could not be helped, I expect.)”

“(Yes, but I do feel bad for Rokuko. Unfortunately, this means there is less chance of us being saved.)”

Haku elected not to think about it. People and gods died when it was their time. Though at times they in fact did not die. Ichika having done her job probably said all it needed to.

“(I suppose we will need to take care and think nothing so our thoughts are not read.)”

“(Perhaps we should have honed our Demon King style?)”

“(It would clearly be contradictory for the Ivory Goddess and her subordinates to use Demon King style.)”

“(...Good grief, that Dolce. She does good work.)”

It was absolutely essential that Haku made sure not to notice the hole in the report.

On the day of the attack, Wataru came. Schedule-wise, he should have been just about arriving at Goren. Why was he here now, of all times? Did something happen around Corky that made him turn around, or... Haku elected not to think deeply about it, so Core 10 couldn't read her mind.

“(Chloe. I will be closing my eyes and ears for a moment.)”

“(Understood. Shall I join you?)”

“(That would be for the best.)”

Something exciting was absolutely about to happen, after all. Hopefully she would awake to find herself saved.

She regained her consciousness.

“(Hm. It seems my body has been rather gravely wounded.)”

“(Good morning, my lady. It seems to have been the repercussions of magic use.)”

The corruption hadn't progressed very much.

It seemed Wataru had attacked her. The ambush consisted of him, a Dragonute, and a black-haired witch, then eventually Leona, forcing Core 10 to flee to the [Ivory Labyrinth].

It would make the most sense to say Leona arranged the attack, which would mean the Dragonute and black-haired witch were likely Leona's pet and Toi. Wataru joining them was a bit unexpected, but...

“(Oh, I best not think further, lest he tighten his guard against Leona and the others.)”

“(There will be no avoiding that. Against the God of Chaos, he will likely modify everything beneath the most explored floor.)”

“(Indeed. Though my dungeon is already unconquerable as it is.)”

It was a massive dungeon totaling over 150 floors. The length of one's dungeon connected directly to exhausting invaders, and so length exponentially increased difficulty over time.

“(It would take a year for even Leona to conquer...)”

“(My lady, steel yourself. This will be a long battle... Let us preserve our strength.)”

“(Indeed... I will fight to the end.)”

Haku forced down the hope that was arising within the deepest layers of her subconscious, and continued thinking that her dungeon could not be conquered.

Chapter 4

Normal Adventurers of the Laverio Empire's Perspective

I was eating in the cafeteria attached to the Adventurer's Guild, with my party members. You could get a lot of food for cheap there, and while we were digging in, one of my adventurer pals stopped by our table.

"Heya, brother. Hear about the Ivory Villa being attacked?"

"Whoa, whoa, what is this, last year? That happened three whole days ago, y'know."

"C'mon, I just got back from a quest."

Well, no helping that then.

"Could you fill me in on the details?"

"Sure, if you buy me a cold one. Not that I know too much myself."

"Hey, anything will do."

He set three coppers, the price of a beer, on the table.

Negotiations complete.

Apparently a terrorist had appeared at the Ivory Goddess's home and gone on a rampage. It turned out the villa had the God of Chaos imprisoned within it, and apparently their goal was freeing them, but... It was unclear what had happened to the Ivory Goddess, or the terrorists. No further public reports had been made, and the Adventurer's Guild was apparently being swarmed. The guildmaster had apparently screeched, "We're still investigating, stop asking already, meow!"

That was about what everyone knew already.

"That's about all I know, but there you go."

"Huh, sounds serious. Thanks."

"Don't sweat it. Thanks for the beer."

And that was when it happened.

"(Please help...)"

Suddenly, a pleasant voice reverberated in my heart. It was coming from outside.

"(Please help. The world is about to end.)"

We went outside the cafeteria and looked up as if in a trance, and saw a massive half-transparent board in the sky, showing the image of a goddess... Of a woman so beautiful she could only ever be called a

goddess.

She had black hair that flowed like silk, and teary red eyes. The front of her clothes were opened, and she lacked breasts. But one's eyes were drawn there anyway, through the mysterious appeal of something sensual and pure at the same time. Ah, what could one call this except divinity?

"Wh-Who the hell is that?"

"No idea. But... Sh-She's so beautiful...!"

"Maybe she's a goddess... No, she's definitely a goddess!"

The man beside me was now completely convinced we were looking at a goddess, as if he had been bewitched. Before I knew it, everyone around me, myself included, were looking at the goddess.

"(I am Succuma. I pray for the peace of the world from my bed. Please, those with confidence in their strength, help me. I need your power—yours.)"

Yours. I was completely confident she meant me there. Not a shred of doubt in my mind. After all, it was the words of *the* goddess.

"Aaah, my holy mother, O my goddess, what do you seek me to do?!"

"O Holy Succuma...! O Holy Succuma...!"

"M-Mama...! MAMAAAAA!"

Everyone, man and woman, began screaming prayers and words of devotion to Her Holiness Succuma. It was a bit off-putting to see a massive dude crying like a baby, but I understood how he felt, so no comment. I felt in my bones his response was natural, even if I didn't logically get it.

"(The world is being exposed to a danger unlike ever before,)" the goddess said sadly, and that alone filled us all with unease.

"(However! There is no need to fear. In order to avert disaster, I have revealed myself before you and am making this personal appeal. It is simple... The [Ivory Labyrinth], one of the oldest dungeons in the world, must be conquered. Do this, and the world will be saved.)"

The ancient dungeon, the [Ivory Labyrinth]. It existed long before any of us were born, and one could say it was the heart of the dungeon industry which served as the basis of the Laverio Empire. At the moment humanity had reached 53 floors deep into it, and there was still no end in sight; that's how fearsome of a dungeon it was. There was no adventurer that didn't know about it.

"(That said, there is no time to waste. If this dungeon is not conquered within the next three days, the world will end,)" the goddess declared. Nothing could have been more devastating.

"How can this be, O Goddess...? Are we doomed?"

"That's impossible, it'll take over three days just to get to Floor 53."

“This is just too much! Aaah, O Succuma...!”

Many of us wailed at the impossible task. None of us doubted that it was true. After all, Her Holiness Succuma was saying it herself. There was no need to doubt it.

“(Our foe is mighty. However! However, this is not an impossible battle. If you can simply reach Floor 189, the bottom floor, I will save the world—I will save it without fail.)”

One hundred and EIGHTY-NINE?! That was over a hundred floors more than had been discovered... Wait, how did she know that anyway?

“(This is information I obtained from a trusted source. Please believe me.)”

“Alright then! If the goddess says it, it must be true!”

Yep, that guaranteed it was true. The goddess was saying it after all! There was no need for any doubt.

The goddess snapped her fingers. “(I have now opened gates throughout the world, in all the lands. These gates lead into the [Ivory Labyrinth].)”

“Say what?!”

It was impossible, and yet not. The goddess was showing her divine form all across the world. She had that much power. Not to mention, I was hearing shouts from all across the street.

“Hey, a gate opened in the guild’s training grounds!”

“Everything Her Holiness Succuma said was true!”

“I-I’m goin’ in, I’m goin’ iiiiin!”

“(At the moment, the starting line is Floor 137... Or rather, it just became Floor 138.)”

A separate window opened beside the goddess. It displayed the famous Wataru the Hero, running down stairs and placing a stone, which opened a gate. Wait, Floor 138? The furthest floor reached was Floor 53. It had more than doubled?

“(I have truthfully used my power to obtain information on every floor up to Floor 160. You will not have much difficulty up to that point.)”

“Holy cow, Her Holiness Succuma is something else!”

“That’s our Succuma for you!”

“Is she a goddess...? Yep, she’s a goddess!”

This coming from Succuma meant there was no mistake, and her words could be trusted. All she said was indisputable fact by definition.

“(When the next floor is conquered, a new path to that floor will surely open. Of course, those on prior floors will not be abandoned; return gates will be provided as well. Think of each floor as having both an entrance and an exit.)”

An adventurer came through the newly formed gate. Wataru said to him, "I'm going to take a short break," and passed through the gate back out, trading places with the new and full-of-energy adventurer.

"Hey, wait a second. Doesn't this mean we don't need to worry about supply chains?"

"This is crazy. We can focus on conquering the dungeon at peak performance at all times?!"

That was a highly appealing idea. Not to mention, Floor 100 and beyond of the Ivory Dungeon was a whole new world, one you would normally never get to see. As an adventurer, just seeing it would be rewarding enough. Though I was a bit worried about whether we were strong enough to make a dent in the dangers of this new world.

Suddenly, a white rabbit hopped onto Her Holiness Succuma the Goddess.

"(My familiars shall guide you. They are weak, small creatures, but if you follow them, you are guaranteed to find your way. Furthermore...)" The goddess took out a sword. It seemed like a generic iron sword, but... "(I shall present each participant with a Magic Blade that will function for the next three days only. It is a special, high-value campaign being held just this once. They will turn into normal iron swords when the event is finished, but you may keep them for yourselves.)"

She swung the sword as she spoke. Apparently there were axes, spears, and other variations, too.

"(Now! It is time to fight for our future! Those who have faith in their skills, please assist with the conquest! Those who do not, please offer your support in other ways! I am waiting for all of you to participate for the sake of preserving peace! Stand forth, adventurers! Sieg Futon! Sieg Futon! Say it with me, everyone! Sieg Futon!)"

"S-Sieg Futon!"

"Sieg Futon...? Sieg Futon!"

"Sieg Futon! Sieg Futon!"

There was some hesitation at first, but the chanting steadily grew louder. As if the chants of all the world were overlapping. I felt the sensation of becoming one with the world.

"(The furthest exploration point of this adventure will continue to be shown via this monitor. Please do provide cheers of support. Now, until we meet again! —This broadcast was provided by the Beddhist Church.)"

The Goddess's window disappeared. However, the other one which showed the battling adventurers remained.

Unlike Wataru the Hero, they were normal adventurers. They were probably C-Ranks or so? But they were doing surprisingly well. They were fighting an actual pack of humanoid monsters, primarily

higher-ranked Minotaurs, but they were throwing everything they had at them and even seemed to be dominating the fight. In their hands were the mana blades gifted to them by the goddess. Judging by how clean the cuts were, their effects must have been sharpening.

And then, one adventurer dropped out due to exhaustion. Naturally, you couldn't fight at full power for long. It was the natural result. However, the hole they left was immediately filled by another adventurer. The adventurer who dropped out rested while being protected by the others. He seemed fairly relaxed while stroking one of the guide rabbits. There were more replacements, in fact so much so that they were actually waiting for those up front to get tired.

What made dungeons hard to conquer was the difficulty of maintaining supply chains, and knowing when to turn back. High-ranked adventurers knew that well, having survived and risen up the ranks due to turning back when they needed to. But what if you didn't need to think about supply chains, and could fight at full power, retreating the moment you got tired? In that kind of situation, even C-Rank adventurers would be plenty strong as firepower.

It did not take very long for the more skilled among the crowd to start thinking, "Wait, we might actually be able to do this."

"S-So, what do we do?" the guy beside me asked.

"Whaddaya mean? There's only one choice here: we gotta go."

We immediately headed to the nearest gate connected to the [Ivory Labyrinth]. I was confident in my skills. This wasn't an adventure I was about to miss! On the way there, the lady who ran a general store said, "Going to fight, eh? Take these!" and pushed better potions than I usually bought right into my hands.

There were two gates in the training grounds, with signs on the side saying either *Entry Only* or *Exit Only*. I steeled my resolve and passed through the entry gate, and found myself in what looked like a coliseum. There were a bunch of gates lining the walls, and each had two ropes that joined together with others to form a path to the center. There was a larger gate, likely leading to the [Ivory Labyrinth], and there were arrows on the ground, likely saying "stay in line."

The gates on the other side of the coliseum were apparently the exit gates. Where all the paths converged were a maid and sister with large signs, organizing the gathered adventurers.

"That was the last member of that group! Okay, stop. Everyone from this point on is part of Group N! Understand? Group N! We will send you when it's your turn, so please await instructions!"

"Group J, you can enter. Stay calm and take one Magic Blade at a time! Ah, hey, you! Even dual wielders can only take one! Succuma will hate you!"

“Those who’ve returned, please go to your special exit gates! Hey, you! Don’t enter through the exit gates! They’re one-way! Go back and go through the entry gate! Those coming for a second time do get another Magic Blade, so please do return after getting rest!”

Surprisingly, the adventurers were all obediently obeying the girls’ instructions. No doubt their occasional warnings that not following the rules would make Succuma hate them were working like a charm. Everyone got put into groups of ten, and headed into the gates one by one.

“The code word iiis... Sieg Futon! Do your best, and don’t push yourselves!”

There were clearly people here who looked like monsters, but apparently they were from the Demon Realm. The maid emphasized that Demon Realm people were allies, too, and to conquer the dungeon on good terms with them. The Demon Realm, huh? I thought they were our enemy, but makes sense we would all unite when the world was in danger. Borders meant nothing when the whole world was about to go poof.

Incidentally, some people lost their patience and tried charging forward, but they were stopped by the others. Judging by what was said, one needed to stay with their group until it was time to go through, and those who tried skipping ahead would be pushed back in line. In which case, patiently waiting was the smartest choice. On top of that, one would ideally stick with their group and fight together after passing through the gate. That way was more efficient.

“This feels kind of incredible. There’s so many adventurers and even monsters here, but everyone’s following instructions.”

“I mean, we don’t want Her Holiness Succuma hating us, right?”
Well that made sense.

“True, true... But just who are that nun and maid, anyway?”

“The nun is a Beddhist nun, obviously. Look at the holy symbol.”

Now that he mentioned it, she did have a circle with a hole hanging from her neck. I was seeing those Beddhist holy symbols all the time recently. Looked like the maid had one, too.

“Her Holiness Succuma must be the goddess of Beddhism. She did mention her broadcast being provided by the Beddhist church.”

“That would explain why the maid’s a Beddhist and why she’s helping.”

As we waited and thought through these things, it finally became our turn to go in.

“Feel free to take whichever Magic Blade you like.”

There were several kinds of Magic Blades, but the most popular seemed to be the sword.

“So many Magic Blades... What a sight,” I said.

“It is all thanks to Succuma’s power. This is nothing to her.”

The guy in front of me took a sword, and immediately another identical one plopped out of a tiny gate. That might well be small-time compared to opening a bunch of gates all throughout the world, but it was still insane to be able to produce as many Magic Blades as one liked.

“However, Magic Blades are nothing without someone to wield them. Her Holiness Succuma is very happy to have everyone helping like this.”

“Well, that’s good to hear!”

We grabbed our Magic Blades, and finally went to the gate.

“Ah, right. Understood. Ahem... Excuse meee! Group Q, please wait a moment before entering! Your cooperation is appreciated!” said a short, green maid. What had happened?

“Wait, what’s going on? Let us in already!”

“Is there a problem?”

“I mean, with this many people, surely there’s a problem or two. Let’s just wait.”

Some in my group groaned and complained, but we all fell silent at the tiny maid’s next words.

“The floor has been updated! It will now start on Floor 140! Please wait as we change the gate!”

“What...?”

Hold on. Wasn’t the start line 138? Had two floors been conquered already? Two unknown floors from the oldest dungeon, the [Ivory Labyrinth]?

“Hold on a second, Her Holiness Succuma said she had information down to Floor 160, right? That’ll be the key to conquering floors fast, then. There’s 189 floors, remember.”

“True. It wouldn’t be impossible with good intel, yeah. Dunno how long those unknown floors will take, though... Hang on, does this mean... Her Holiness Succuma is really gonna do it?”

“Yeah. At this pace, we’ll conquer the [Ivory Labyrinth] all the way to the bottom floor in just three days.”

The [Ivory Labyrinth] being completely conquered. Suddenly, that felt possible: a real goal that could be achieved.

“Next group, there will be momentary difficulties as the camp for the next floor is established, so the Holy Kingdom’s Church of Light has sent Alca the High Priestess to assist! I repeat, Alca the High Priestess will be assisting!”

A nun brought forth a green-haired woman wearing white robes. She lightly held a brutish, pig-iron axe, leaving no doubt that she was the famous... or rather, infamous, High Priestess Alca.

“Wait, *that* High Priestess Alca?! From the Church of Light?!”

“Oh my, you know my name? Ahaha, let us destroy... Oh, wait, his holiness the pope forbade me from destroying this dungeon. Let us conquer this dungeon together,” Alca said, giving a soft, warm smile.

“Er, uh, right... Erm, the Church of Light will be helping?”

“Indeed. The gate over there is linked to Mastermind in the Holy Kingdom.”

The High Priestess pointed to a gate with a pretty sizable line pushing through it. It seemed the Church of Light’s believers were flooding in, since it was a rare chance to participate in the conquering of an actual dungeon. The beastkin and Demon Realm folks were grimacing, but once a nun chastised them and said everyone was friends here, they gave dopey expressions and nodded.

“So who is Succuma, anyway?”

“She’s Succuma. What do you mean?”

“True, but... Meh, whatever. To the [Ivory Labyrinth]!”

I elected to stop thinking about the small stuff. Either way, it was good to have a helper used to fighting in dungeons. We passed through the gate to the [Ivory Labyrinth] alongside Alca the High Priestess.

It had been a very busy three days. And it was guaranteed that the next three days would be busy as well.

Being in Succubus form like this is tiring in more ways than one, but eh... Gotta do what you gotta do.

“Papa! Broadcast complete, good work!”

“Yep. Thanks, Soto.”

We were in a new room added to our dungeon, the [Cave of Greed], which in practice was just a blank white cube. One could act fancy and call it a broadcasting room.

I grabbed a cup of water and took a swig. *Phew, that sure was a lot of talking. Oh, and good work to you, too, Mr. Rabbit. Have a carrot. Come on... Don’t rub my feet, just leave. It tickles. The heck, are you charmed or something? Get outta here. Please... Ah, he listened when I asked. Makes sense.*

“Good work to you, too, Soto. Or rather, thank you for your continued work that isn’t over just yet, I guess.”

“This is nothin’, papa!” Soto exclaimed, flexing her arm proudly, showing the golden chains surrounding her body—the anti-charm [Chains of Admonition], which we had borrowed from Ittetsu.

“(My dearest little sister, Rokuko is flailing about and gnashing her teeth to see you,)” came a telepathic message from Core 219, passing through the rose on Soto’s chest.

“Succuma is currently on break and refusing all meetings,” I replied.

“(Then I shall bind her with vines... Ahaha, to think even the beauty of your voice would cause such danger. My beloved little sister.)”

Incidentally, Rokuko was presently in another room, giving instructions alongside Core 219 by the entrance to the [Ivory Labyrinth]... That is, they were directing the Silkies and Succubus nuns in the coliseum.

Sweet Succuma had a smile ({Charm} skill) that could charm the whole world. On top of that, I had {Ultra Transformed} into Succuma and fused the Succubus possessions to make a Goddess-class Succubus known as Perfect Succuma. If Rokuko met me now, she would lose her mind and not be able to work for the entire rest of the day. It was even a double-edged sword, where if I didn't wear a [Lionheart Bracelet (Godly)] then I would lose control of myself. I didn't want Rokuko losing her mind, so she would have to wait until the plan ended. {Ultra Transformation} had a usage limit, and I couldn't risk ending it carelessly.

In any case, there was a reason why I had made sure Soto was in here even at the cost of her having to wear the highest tier of anti-charm equipment; she was playing a huge part in this plan, and in fact was so essential it wouldn't function at all without her.

First, I used Soto's {Storage} to connect to as many monitors as possible. I put them over as many major cities as I could, including those in the chief countries of the empire, the Demon Realm, the Holy Kingdom, and Daide. All of them broadcasted me, Succuma.

Next, I sent the adventurers charmed by me to the front lines using gates which were actually {Storage}, thereby connecting all of the major cities to the coliseum area under my control. This made for a smooth passageway to the gate leading to the [Ivory Labyrinth].

The key players here were the tiny Stone Golems that I had taught {Storage}. They functioned as magic tools that created gates, and I had Soto connect them to each floor of the [Ivory Labyrinth]. Each connected city used them, and on the surface they looked like simple stones. All I did was turn some stones onto the floor into Golems, so the real credit went to Soto, who had used her {Teensy Reproduction} to mass-produce {Storage} scrolls for teaching them.

“Isn't it tiring to keep so many {Storage} gates open?” I asked.

“I just leave 'em alone after opening them, so not really, papa!”

What a good daughter. Her credit here was so massive, I was getting worried about whether Perfect Succuma's socks were really enough to cover it.

Speaking of which, these gates helped out enormously for conquering 135 floors in the three days of prep time. Although we had gotten a map and intelligence on the first 160 floors from Misha, it

was undoubtedly thanks to Soto that the “normal adventurer parties” made from Mannequin Golems and “completely normal rats” could safely do their work. Ideally I would have wanted to make it all the way to Floor 160, but even then forty-five floors or so per day was still real impressive.

There were naturally Boss Rooms along the way, but we used a harmless, completely powerless Slime to slide under the crack of the doors and pass for free. It was a technique we had learned via the Paper Golems. From there we just had to use {Storage} to swap places, and then completely normal rats could swarm the dungeon.

There were some doors along the way sealed properly such that not even a Slime could slide through, but we managed to pass through via the acrobatic technique of temporarily putting the boss into {Storage}. We luckily caught them off guard and didn’t get noticed.

So basically, we were passing this off as a completely normal adventurer party’s doing. Haku (Core 10) must have been really surprised when, out of nowhere, there were suddenly enemies on her Floor 135.

Incidentally, through Wataru’s dice rolling we confirmed Haku was presently on Floor 189, which was also the bottom floor. She had been there three days ago as well, so she hadn’t built any new floors. But let me make it clear that if we had sent a party consisting of Wataru the Hero and the God of Chaos Leona instead of the mannequins, by the time they hit Floor 136 the dungeon would have turned into a 350 floor monster.

Man oh man, {Ultra Good Fortune} sure is convenient. (*Cheating)*

In any case, far more participants were here than I expected. Which meant that the Magic Blades I had mass-produced ahead of time were at risk of running out, so I needed to make more.

“Alriiight, I’m busy but I’ll do my best. Soto, the materials for the Magic Blades.”

“Uh-huh, I’ve got lots and lots, so just say when you need some!” Soto said, taking out an {Iron Golem} corpse from {Storage}. I began my second job of turning them into Magic Blades.

Wataru’s Perspective

“Whew. Now that was tiring.”

Having completed his job of cutting down three floors of monsters and opening a gate on Floor 138, Wataru returned to the [Rabbit Rest Spot]. He went to the room that had been assigned to him out of the several break rooms. As a note, these break rooms were for the powerhouses Keima had scouted out for help, and just passing by some of their doors gave him chills. It was impressive he had found so

many that made even Wataru feel a chill.

Upon returning to his room, there were Neruneh and Igni who were there to keep the room in order, and Leona who was there for fun despite having a room of her own.

“Wataru, good work!” Igni shouted.

“Good wooork, Wataruuu.”

Igni and Neruneh both held out crimson red potions. As hard as it was to believe, they were both the legendary Full Potions, which as the name described, completely rejuvenated the drinker. It was an enormous waste to use them for simple exhaustion, but Wataru was used to it already. After all, the God of Alchemy (Leona) had made them out of empty bottles right in front of his eyes. According to her, she was simply alchemizing the air within them into potions...

Apparently this world did not have any conservation of mass.

“Thanks,” Wataru said, taking one potion with each hand, opening them simultaneously with his thumbs and pointer fingers, then chugging them both down. It REALLY was a waste to use solely for exhaustion, but if he didn’t do it this way one or the other of them would complain. Neruneh would say, “Ooooh, not drinking my potioooooon?” while Igni would say, “It’s the chest, isn’t it?! Mine’s going to get big, too, sooner or later, okay?!” Wataru was tired of both, so he drank two at once. Apparently overconsuming Full Potions had no adverse effect.

“My, my, this certainly feels nice. You love my potions so much you chug them like nothing else, hm?” Leona asked, giggling. At first he got caught off guard by her appearing out of nowhere without any sound, but he had learned she was just the kind of person who liked doing that. Also, things were best when she was teasing like that, since he knew she enjoyed it.

“They’re as tasty and go down as easy as I would expect from one of your potions, Leona.”

The God of Chaos was also the God of Alchemy, and chugging her divine Full Potions for fun was enough of a waste to make a normal alchemist die of shock. But that was exactly why Leona was satisfied.

“Have another potion on the house. Show it when you tell this story to an alchemist one day.”

“Oh, thank you. They’ll be real jealous!”

Leona and Wataru laughed together. You know... They got along surprisingly well. At the moment, anyway.

“Leonaaa, could you tell me how to make potions like thiiiis?” Neruneh asked.

“Wha?! Ah, me too, I wanna make them, too!” Igni shouted.

“I suggest making vegetable juice or sports drinks instead. Have some recipes,” Leona said, scrawling them out on paper. No doubt

recipes written by the God of Chaos would be worth a mountain of gold coins, but putting that aside, the fact the ingredients included a bunch of bitter vegetables and Dragon scales was only natural. Effects guaranteed by the God of Chaos.

“Thank yooou. Get ready for my vegetable juuuice,” Neruneh said.

“My potion’s gonna be stronger!” Igni declared. Both of them left to get the ingredients. Mikan could get the vegetables for her instantly, and the rest of the ingredients seemed to be on the easy side, too, so the next time Wataru returned from the dungeon he would probably have vegetable juice and a sports drink offered to him.

That also meant he ended up alone with Leona, but Wataru didn’t feel particularly afraid of her. It helped that their first meeting was her saving him, but they were both black-haired Heroes, and hearing tales from a fellow Japanese person had given him a sense of companionship. He had asked her about Keima’s identity, but she told Wataru to ask him directly, since she didn’t like spoilers.

“Still, I didn’t think he would actually get the whole world involved,” Wataru mused.

“I know, right? All these gates... Sweet Succuma sure is something else.”

“Ahaha, she really is.”

Wataru hadn’t been told the reality that the gates were not Succuma’s powers, but rather Soto’s. That was to make it so he couldn’t tell other people about it.

Hence why Wataru couldn’t even talk about the “tricks” he had performed with Soto back in Daide. The gates were apparently using the same trick, but it had gone way above the level of simple tricks. There were limitations and rules, or so he had heard, but still, he was opening gates throughout cities across the world and leaving them open. He had no explanation of why Soto could use that skill—or really, apparently Keima didn’t know why she could either—but in the end Wataru was confident that Sototemporarily truly was a goddess.

That would explain why Keima was using Succuma to try to hide Soto. It was a cheat so strong even the God of Chaos was surprised. No doubt the fact that freshly removed socks were in such high demand was due to the cost of using the power.

And so, that morning, Alca the High Priestess had activated the contract magic {Treaty} at the [Ivory Labyrinth] before Wataru’s very eyes. Its effect blocked dungeons, and prevented new floors or monsters from being made. Which reminded Wataru... Keima had used a spell just like that, but maybe it was a different one which just coincidentally had the same name.

“So basically, thanks to Alca, we can now start conquering the

dungeon for real.”

“That’s right. You sure were rolling dice for a while, huh?”

“Yeah... Another quest, another night spent rolling dice...”

“Keima sure thinks of a lot of funny things, huh? Who would’ve thought you could use {Ultra Good Fortune} like that.”

Although Keima had said he didn’t expect much dice rolling this time, in the end Wataru had been stuck rolling dice for what felt like forever.

The main topic of investigation was the [Ivory Labyrinth’s] floor count.

If the dice were plus or minus two from a floor that was one point, and after one hundred rolls the floor with the most points would be the bottom floor. Then, to be really thorough, he flipped a coin to make sure that was in fact the correct floor.

On top of that, with the help of Mikan and other dungeon rulers, Wataru’s {Ultra Good Fortune} was brought up to level four. They created two Cores for him to destroy. It was safe to say the information was twice as accurate now.

“I thought that rolling dice with {Ultra Good Fortune} would only get you information about as good as a fortune teller, but I’ve changed my mind. You rolled three times and got 200 floors each time.”

“This is all just statistics, isn’t it? But, well... Having to roll dice each time a plan is made, and check that the final floor wouldn’t change due to it, is a lot. Think about the person rolling the dice...”

“That can hardly be helped, can it? There’d be no winning if she dug down to Floor 350 or something. We couldn’t go in until the Church of Light’s High Priestess used {Treaty}.”

The first plan had been for Wataru, Igny, and Leona to start as an elite squadron, but at Keima’s instruction they investigated the floor count after that, and it had turned into 300. In other words, they learned that going in with an elite squad would make Haku add more floors. Though not even Wataru realized he could basically predict the future like that.

After further investigation under various conditions, Keima ultimately brought a group of silent, mask-wearing adventurers. All five of them wore masks, and wouldn’t talk with anyone but Keima. It turned out they could get to Floor 135 without the final floor of 189 changing.

“Keima said they were just a normal adventurer’s party, but they must be really powerful. They conquered a hundred and thirty-five floors in just three days... Where the heck did he find them, I wonder?” Wataru said.

Even with them knowing the right routes and solutions to traps ahead of time, it was still ridiculous. The [Ivory Labyrinth] had areas

overflowing with lava like a volcano, and had icy areas that froze one's very blood. There were jungle areas filled with poisonous bugs flying around, and even deserts with sand that made it impossible to walk anywhere. Even with portals removing the difficulty of bringing the necessary special gear removed, it still meant they had conquered all of those areas with ease. And without the dungeon operators noticing, either.

Would those people be helping with the rest of the dungeon conquering, too? Wataru looked at the "monitor" which was on display even in the break rooms. It was a half-transparent, magical screen which at the moment displayed Alca the High Priestess at work on conquering Floor 141.

Alca's Perspective

What did a diligent Church of Light follower admire more than anything else? Nothing other than the conquest of dungeons. When it came to conquering the [Ivory Dungeon], one of the oldest in the world, well, it was natural that one of the Church of Light would even be willing to pay money to join.

And the High Priestess of that very Church of Light was presently swinging around a pig-iron axe on Floor 140 of the [Ivory Labyrinth], cutting down Shine Minotaurs.

"To think his holiness Pope Narikin would order me directly to conquer the [Ivory Labyrinth]! He even negotiated to give me direct permission to participate! That is very different from the useless previous pope, who did nothing but rot his organization from within."

Naturally, they did not give permission to destroy the Dungeon Core, but even so the process of fighting a dungeon to reach its bottom floor was enough to have her brain overflow with joy.

The other members of her group promptly dissected and retrieved the Minotaur corpses. The High Priestess generally just left corpses to rot, but it was nice to have them used efficiently, too.

"Lady Alca, please advance forward at your leisure! We will handle the menial matters!"

"Why thank you. But I will be advancing at my pace, so do try to keep up," she replied to the following adventurers, and followed after the guiding white rabbits. According to the map she had seen ahead of time, there were many kilometers between their current position and the next stairway, but the goal was to conquer it in twenty to thirty minutes regardless. They had no time to rest, and it wouldn't take long enough for them to need to rest regardless. Alca's job was to smash the floor as a vanguard so the next wave of adventurers could fully lock down what remained. As the {Treaty} prevented new

monsters from being made, the dungeon became easier with each new monster that Alca slayed.

“This is unmistakably a battle that will go down in history to be spoken of unto eternity. To participate in such an honor, my very soul quakes at the thought...!”

According to his holiness Narikin, the plan was to fill every floor from top to bottom with adventurers. It was much higher-scale than using a knight squadron to conquer it, and was a plan on an unheard-of scale. Connecting the world through gates was also a fearsome power. No, beyond this Succuma was a truly powerful god.

“That said, to think Wataru the Hero and the God of Chaos would be participating as well... Even evil gods obey Succuma, I see.”

Evil gods. The term represented gods that allied with dungeons and opposed the God of Light. The God of Chaos had been gifted various powers from the God of Light, only to betray him in the end; one could say they were the second-most famous evil god beside the God of Darkness. For this battle, Succuma was allying with the God of Chaos to challenge the [Ivory Labyrinth]. Alca had seen her for the first time on this occasion, and it was truly profound irony that she shared the black hair symbolic of the first ever High Priestess of the Church of Light.

“Though that said, the first High Priestess Lady Shishido has absolutely nothing in common with the God of Chaos!”

When Alca the High Priestess generously greeted her, the God of Chaos replied, “The High Priestess? Ahhh. The dog of the Light God. My sympathies,” with cold eyes. To compare a High Priestess to a mere pet! They were not dogs, they simply received favor from the gods! But when Alca said this, Leona replied, “What does one call a lesser being given favor if not a pet?” and Alca had faltered. Ahhh, she was unmistakably the God of Chaos; who else could trouble the heart of a High Priestess?

Just remembering it annoyed her. She swung her axe around, and before she knew it they had arrived at the stairs to the next floor.

“Oh, we’ve arrived. In which case...”

Alca took the Gate Stone she had borrowed from her pocket and placed it on the ground. A bit after the gate opened, a leader—that being a strong person like Alca chosen by Succuma—would be passing through with a group of adventurers. Alca saw them off, then momentarily returned through the gate to rest a bit before challenging the next floor.

“At last, my turn. Oh, how I anticipated this... Just how long will this dance be, I wonder?”

A young, red-haired girl from the Demon Realm arrived with a red Magic Blade in hand and a drunken look of glee on her face. There

was no opening in her walk, which smelled of Demon King style. Alca sensed that the butler serving her was a master of it as well. Floor 141 might as well have been conquered already.

The gate for returning to the coliseum from the [Ivory Labyrinth] first passed through a room. It had multiple floors leading to different return gates, and you could pass through them to return to the entrance of the coliseum.

After returning through a gate, Alca found herself in front of Rei the High Priestess.

“Good work, Lady Alca.”

“Thank you, Lady Rei.”

Rei handed her a crimson red potion. It was a Full Potion made by the God of Chaos. As annoying as it was, no doubt it would be as effective as one would expect from a potion made by the God of Alchemy. One sip healed all the scratches on her, and made all her exhaustion vanish. She was ready to conquer the next floor flat-out.

“How did Succuma convince the God of Chaos to make these potions, I wonder?”

“I’m told she just asked her.”

“...Just that, for potions on this level? Perhaps she has blackmail on the God of Chaos.”

In other words, Succuma had such power over the God of Chaos she could ask her to do anything, even conquer a dungeon. The Church of Light generally did not believe in other gods, but perhaps it would be safe to make an exception for Succuma and consider her an ally of the God of Light. Alca the High Priestess was utterly confident his holiness Narikin would understand.

Aidy’s Perspective

Haku Laverio’s true dungeon, the [Ivory Labyrinth]. When Rokuko asked her to assist with conquering it, Aidy had this to say:

“Oh my. My services as a mercenary are rather pricey, you should know.”

“You don’t have to come if you don’t want to.”

“You may count on me, Rokuko. What are friends for?”

How could she have ever turned down such a thrilling proposition? And so, Aidy elected to dance upon Rokuko’s palm without protest. She owed her to begin with, and Haku was in a state in which Aidy was owed a favor, so there had been no option to refuse to begin with. Most of all, there were few opportunities to dance within Haku Laverio’s dungeon. She leapt at the mere possibility of getting to fight with Haku herself.

“By the way, if you would invite Core 50 and Core 6 to join as

well, that'd be really nice. You know, having all of us fighting together like that festival."

"Certainly; I will send word. I am sure Grandfather and Core 50 will rejoice. So, when is the party planned?"

Though she never expected the battle would be three entire days later. The fact that she was so excited she couldn't sleep the day before, like a new soldier about to be shipped off to the front, can be a secret between you and me.

Thus came this morning. The Great Demon King (Core 6) and her master (Core 50) had both agreed to fight as expected; she went to her waiting room in the [Rabbit Rest Spot] with both them and her Master-cum-butler Sebas. It was a different gate from those used in Dungeon Battles, but it was splendid to have a way to go from the Demon Realm to the empire instantly. Warfare would be advanced greatly if this could be used often to send armies into dungeons.

"Ahaha. Grandfather, Dungeon Core Number 50. I simply cannot wait to invade the [Ivory Labyrinth]," Aidy said, twirling in her favorite Valkyrie Dress.

"Hmph... To think she would let herself get taken over by Core 10. Good grief, never let your guard down."

"Saving the queen of a rival country that was attacked by a third party... This is quite the heated development!"

Core 6 was in truth Haku's ally, and Core 50 was motivated to fight. The plan was to send the two of them in when an especially dangerous foe appeared. Though if no such foe arrived, they would not be sent out at all.

"We would not mind conquering floors as well, you know."

"Oh my, Dungeon Core Number 50. Do allow such fun activities to be done by we young people."

"Ahaha, no arguing with a princess there. Well, feeling like a summoned monster for once will be insightful! I need only wait to be summoned to fight a strong foe!"

Just as Aidy began considering how delicious that feeling must actually be, she was called over. It seemed Floor 141 had been reached and she had been selected as the vanguard.

"Let us go, Sebas."

"Yes, my lady."

Aidy descended to Floor 141 with her master Sebas in tow. She passed by Alca the High Priestess and began conquering at once. They turned the orcs they met into cooked Slime with fire Magic Blades. A sweet scent filled the dungeon halls.



“You know, I believe we could stay and help conquer the floor completely after setting the gate down. It seems that there are Orc Kings protecting treasure off the main paths; what do you think?”

“I see. In my humble opinion, it would perhaps be best left as mere exercise. The true battle has not yet begun.”

“You are quite right, Sebas. I was having so much fun I nearly forgot. If I do not stay in peak form, I may fall behind...”

By “the true battle,” he meant that a Boss-rank monster had been reported to be on a future floor. Ahhh, how her heart throbbed. Aidy was planned to join the boss fight as well, but it seemed that by having all of the Demon King faction cores challenge Haku to a Dungeon Battle and connect themselves through Core 6’s dungeons, all of the Battle Junky cores and their subordinates would be participating as well. Aidy could not risk falling behind them and losing her chance at fun. There were many enemies, but not an infinite amount, and the Demon Realm Cores were all rather powerful. Wasting her energy here could cause problems later.

Still, it was very heartening to know that the Great Demon King and Core 50 were staying back. There would be no tension in the fight otherwise, so fun could really only be had with them absent.

“Oh, we’ve arrived.”

In the blink of an eye, they reached Floor 142. The rabbit guides had been steady and true. The adventurers following behind her had made a decent pathway themselves. To them, Aidy was the most reliable vanguard one could have, cutting down such a deadly path that they had been able to mop up the rest without any fear. Just as Keima had planned.

“Sebas. Could we not proceed and do the same in Floor 142?”

“I am told that Lady Igni the Flame Dragon is in charge of the next floor.”

“Hrm. Far be it from me to steal a toy from a child.”

In general the dungeon was designed with human opponents in mind, and there were not many floors conquerable by one with a massive Dragon body. Floor 142 was one such floor, wide enough for even a Dragon to go on a rampage. Igni was older than Aidy, but mentally still a child. She did not want to deal with her throwing a tantrum.

Aidy set the Gate Stone down, and a gate opened on its own. From within appeared the next invader... Igni. She was a Flame Dragon highly pumped up to show Wataru her good side. Her human form had been disengaged from the start; she was completely a Dragon.

“Ah, Aidy! Good work!”

“It hardly felt like work at all. The enemies were nothing to me.”

“Wow! Well, next up is my turn! Time to wreck this place!”

Aidy saw Igni the Dragon run off, then returned to the previous floor to work her body a bit more. It was not long before the Orc King would be turned into cooked meat.

Haku (Core 10)’s Perspective

“What is the meaning of this?! Enemies appeared on Floor 135 out of nowhere?!”

Core 10, after fleeing, had been left unable to move for some time due to the rebound of the Ultra Magic. That brand of magic granted one enormous power for a day, but had a terrible rebound as well. On top of that, he had not grown entirely used to this other body, and his inability to fight at full power had been proof of that.

“Furthermore, how is Alca the High Priestess in the empire?! It’s impossible!”

It had happened just as he recovered from the rebound and opened his dungeon map to consider his next steps. He felt something odd, and then a moment later the High Priestess had activated {Treaty} by the dungeon’s entrance. Core 10 understood its effects well, as the former pope of the Church of Light: it sealed dungeon functions. Now he couldn’t add new floors and hide even farther underground.

It also made no sense that Wataru the Hero had subsequently appeared out of nowhere on Floor 135, a yet-unconquered floor. Not even {Teleportation} could get him there. How had he been carried that far?

“Dolce, attention, Dolce!”

“Yes, my lady?” Dolce asked, appearing before Haku (Core 10) without a sound. Core 10 used Dolce more than anyone else, given their affinity as fellow undead. It helped that her skills and position were ideal for that, but even so, she was his most trusted retainer.

“What were you doing?! Why are there invaders on Floor 135?!”

“I apologize, but I know nothing of this matter.”

“This happened because you were lazy! Expect punishment... Or not, I cannot get more subordinates while {Treaty} is active. To think I could not even have my fun!” Haku (Core 10) gritted his teeth.

“Hold them off! If we can last just three days, it will be our victory!”

He could not help but regret that if only he had modified the dungeon as soon as he fled, then this would not be happening.

“Ichika. Do you know what caused this?”

“Hm? Y’mean them slipping in? Rats and whatnot don’t show on the map, and {Teleportation} lets you go to places you’ve been, right?”

“A combination of beast form and {Teleportation}... They must have been planning this for a long time.”

Ichika's answers were always clear and precise. The tea she brewed was delicious, and overall she was highly competent. Perhaps he would turn her into an undead retainer after she died.

In the meantime, Wataru arrived at Floor 138. He set down some kind of stone on the ground. Above it opened a gate much like those that appeared for Dungeon Battles.

“What in the world...?!”

“Ooo, that must've been how Wataru got here.”

And so, new invaders arrived from the faux-gate. They seemed like normal adventurers, but... Floor 138 didn't have particularly strong monsters. Or well, they were stronger than the bait monsters placed on the early floors like Floor 20, but they weren't beyond the reach of a group of C-Rank adventurers giving it their all for a couple of fights.

The reason for that had to do with Haku's dungeon-construction philosophy. The [Ivory Labyrinth] was a massive dungeon with 189 floors, but it was designed flexibly such that DP would be spent in real time to adjust to the invaders. Reason being, that was more efficient.

In other words, it was safe to say that the unconquered floors were not well made for a dungeon.

Even if one placed strong monsters on those floors, no invaders meant they saw no use, and would just waste DP through their maintenance costs. It was *more efficient* to make the husk of floors, and then spend DP to place strong monsters specifically designed to counter invaders when they did arrive. That was precisely why the [Ivory Labyrinth] was an impossibly difficult dungeon that had spent over 500 years with only 53 of its floors being conquered.

On the other hand, the bottom floors which never had any invaders—putting aside the floors she had used for a bit of experimentation or a bit of fun, or those she had granted to her subordinates to do with as they liked—only had the bare minimum of structure needed to be called a floor. This was precisely why even these bottom floors had monsters not too different from those on Floor 53, with the consideration that a normal adventurer would be exhausted by the time they reached this point.

Core 10 drew that from the depths of the weakened Haku's mind, and panicked.

Under normal circumstances, the [Ivory Labyrinth] would have survived through floor count alone even after being hit with the {Treaty}. With 189 of them, lasting three days for it to end would have been trivial. But here the invaders began abruptly on Floor 135, and on top of that were always at the peak of their energy. If the

invasion continued as it was, they would reach the bottom floor within {Treaty}'s limit of three days.

"Calm down, Lady Haku. You've still got fifty whole floors, don'tcha?"

"...R-Right, yes, I do. Fifty whole floors."

Ichika consoled Haku (Core 10). It had been a shock to see them suddenly reach Floor 138, even as deep as that was; having fifty floors would usually still be more than enough. That said, the gates were clearly abnormal. And it made no sense that adventurers could pass through them.

"What even are these gates? This is... not a Dungeon Battle, correct?"

A Dungeon Battle would have sent a notification. What were these gates, then?

"Oops. My bad, Lady Haku. Shit might actually be real. They're beating these floors hella fast."

"What?!"

His thoughts were interrupted by the mere C-Rank adventurers conquering Floor 139. They had done it fast, and followed the shortest path possible. Which reminded him... Wataru the Hero had also taken the shortest path possible, somehow.

"How is this happening? It's as if they know the correct path... Dolce, do you have any ideas as to why this might be?"

"Hm... Perhaps Misha, one of the Four Braves, leaked intelligence."

"One of the Four Braves? There was no Misha amid the four retainers."

Haku's four Named monsters serving as retainers were Dolce, Amelia, Sally, and Chloe. No Misha was on the list of Named monsters.

Core 10 dug through Haku's memories again. Misha... There. The guildmaster of the Adventurer's Guild. Haku's subordinates, one of the Four Braves, and... An agent of the Great Demon King (Core 6).

"Ngh?! What the?! Are you sane?! Why make one of Core 6's agents your subordinate?!"

The traitor faction and the Demon King faction were at war, as far as he knew. He searched her memories to find the meaning of this, but could dig no further. It must have been something she truly wished to hide.

While he was floundering with her memories, the invaders got all the way to Floor 155. That was way too fast. If he ever got his hands on Misha, he would have her face a fate worse than death.

"Ngh... How irritating!"

His dungeon functions had been sealed, and all he could really do

was repair walls or create useless items. There was nothing he could do to offer proper resistance to the invaders. To think that dungeons hit by {Treaty} suffered this much!

“Gah, the gates! Aim for the gates!”

He directed a wandering boss unit that had been placed on Floor 138 but ignored to the gate. Core 10 didn’t know what was going on, but this was like a Dungeon Battle. In which case, there was no hope of victory without attacking back.

The gate came into sight. The adventurers were circling the gate in a defensive position, but not enough that the Hunter Minotaur could not handle on his own... Until an armored figure leapt from the gate and killed it with ease.

“Core 50?! Why is a Demon Realm Core here?!”

Core 50 appeared exactly like a summoned monster, cut the Hunter Minotaur in half with a single blow, then passed back through the gate as if nothing had happened. It simply didn’t make sense.

“Hm? Dude, looks like Aidy’s still fighting on Floor 141 too. She’s a Demon King faction Core too, isn’t she?” Ichika said casually, while pouring fresh tea.

“What?! Does that mean... This is an attack from the Demon King faction?”

Considering locations, that was not unfathomable. The [Ivory Labyrinth] was positioned exceedingly close to the Demon Realm.

“But it simply does not make sense. Why are Demon Realm Cores... Dolce, do you know anything about this?”

“My apologies, I do not.”

“You would claim to know nothing of relations to the Demon Realm Cores despite being head of the spy division?! Liar!” Core 10 shouted, punching Dolce. She allowed it to happen.

“Lady Haku dealt with Demon Realm matters directly.”

“Tch, fine...”

He clicked his tongue, but punching Dolce wouldn’t solve anything. As no new monsters could be made, he had to cope with the monsters he had at the moment.

At this point, Ichika raised her hand. “Lady Hakuuu. So basically, you can’t summon monsters due to the High Priestess?”

“That is correct. There is nothing I can do. Curses!”

“I’ve got a totes good idea then, if you wanna hear. Though it’ll cost ya.”

“If you have an idea, speak!”

Ichika’s lips curved into a grin. “You just gotta make monsters without using the dungeon functions. There’s magic just for that, y’know?”

Ichika’s words snapped Haku (Core 10) back to reality. There was

indeed magic just like that. Core 10's own magic hadn't been sealed. That had been a blind spot for him.

“■■■, ■■■■■■, ■■■■■■■■—{Summon Undead}.”

The {Summon Undead} spell worked without incident, and a Giant Zombie appeared from the circle. He could produce monsters after all! Right. Then all he had to do was rely on himself, not the dungeon functions!

“Ahaha, I am not powerless after all! Oh yes, and with that done, what reward do you seek, Ichika?”

“You seem busy, and I'm tired, so we can totes do it later. Lady Haku can do it in a minute.”

“Hrm, I see. Remind me whenever you like,” Haku (Core 10) said before shifting his focus to producing undead. “I will now bury them in a mountain of undead!”

Haku (Core 10) cackled loudly. The front lines of the invasion were on Floor 158, so he would send a flood of monsters there and make a Monster House... No, he would do so on Floor 160 instead, to be safe. Haku (Core 10) pumped himself up and produced ten entire Dragon Zombies. That much would be necessary since the enemy had Dragons themselves. He also prepared Deadly Slimes, as they were resistant to slashes and physical attacks. That would solve any Core 50-related problems.

It took time, but he made a Monster House that was impressive indeed.

“Bwahaha, now kill them all and make them into zombies... Mm?”

It was just hitting dawn. What appeared as the challenger for Floor 160 was a fairly weak-looking water spirit.

“Out of tricks? Do they think a mob monster can defeat my elite squadron?”

The spirit even looked sick, as if they were faltering in fear before the Giant Zombies. Perhaps the Undine was a pawn being thrown away to investigate. In which case, perhaps they could use the spirit themselves—Core 10 (Haku) closed his eyes in thought.

“Lady Haku, the undead army has been completely destroyed,” Dolce said. Haku (Core 10) opened his eyes and saw that nothing was there. Or rather, the Undine was still there, still sunken on the ground.

“What...?”

He had worked so hard to put the undead together, and they were all gone. In an instant. What had transpired in the few seconds he had closed his eyes?

“Wh-What happened, Dolce? Report the situation.”

“I-I saw nothing myself. I will replay the monitor recording.”

They rewound to ten seconds ago, when Haku (Core 10's) eyes were closed... and then his eyes widened in surprise.

Dinne's Perspective

Dinne, an Undine living within a beautiful lake by the imperial city of Corky, was for some reason recruited as a powerhouse fighter.

"Erm... I'm starting to wonder if I should really be here."

Naturally, when first invited she was all on board, saying it was only natural someone as strong as her would be invited, but in the end she ended up rooming next to the High Priestess, a Hero, Dragons, the Great Demon King, a fire spirit far above her, and even the God of Chaos. She ended up teary-eyed, feeling completely out of place.

It wasn't as if she had met them up close. They all had their own rooms, and Dinne had one for herself. Or rather, she had instructed for one to be prepared, since that was the politeness expected if they were going to ask for her help. She only began to consider herself a bit out of place when she saw one powerhouse or another visiting through the monitor. Even a team of what seemed to be two humans appeared stronger than her.

"...J-Just how many golds are they receiving?" she asked the green maid, Kinue, who had come to her room. For reference, Dinne had received ten golds for her service. That was a lot for her, so no doubt these two humans received infinitely more.

"Let's see... You mean Aidy and Sebas? They received... zero golds, it seems."

"Zero...? What about silvers?"

"Zero silvers and coppers. In other words, they are doing it for free."

Dinne could hardly believe her ears. They would take a job this dangerous for no cost?

"...Ah, what about this one?! The Dragon! Dragons love treasure, so they must have gotten a lot too!"

"Igني? I believe she is doing it for free as well."

"For... free..."

Igني was participating proactively to show Wataru her good points. He would owe her a debt afterwards, which meant it wasn't entirely for free, but that was just a technicality.

"Ah, that great fire spirit! Surely he must be taking in tons of golds!"

"Ittetsu? I believe he simply asked for... alcohol and spicy paste."

"Alcohol, and paste..."

"I made the paste," Kinue added with a proud smile. The alcohol wasn't expensive either, and rather than a gold cost one silver at most.

"Erm, surely the other Dragon isn't doing it for free, right? They must have demanded a mountain of gold."

"Redra? She wanted baked sweets... as many Goren beets as she wants, or something like that."

“G-Goren beets...”

What happened to the stereotype that Dragons love treasure? Well, Dragons were certainly big eaters, and a single gold of food would be chewed through in an instant.

“What about this mercenary band of extremely skilled-looking adventurers?! They must have wanted a huge payment, right?!”

“That is a platoon of former Last Commune members led by Hugo, who renamed it the Mama Defense Squad. I believe their payment was for Succuma to blow them a kiss.”

“Blowing a kiss...”

A priceless gift. That didn’t even involve touching; just how pure were they?

“Ah! Baphomet! Surely a demon would demand enormous payment!”

“Number 564’s payment was the scythe he is using now. He wanted a spare.”

“A scythe...”

Those were one of those free weapons you could get by participating. His reward was nothing more than that of a normal participant!

“...The Hero and the High Priestess? It’s a cliché in stories for them to be greedy, right?”

“Wataru was given the right to go on a date with a coworker of mine. Alca the High Priestess is doing it for free. Naturally having her seal the dungeon for free would be a bit much, however, so we intend to offer her sweets.”

“Rights to a date... Sweets...”

Dinne got depressed. At this point, she was starting to feel like a cheap and greedy spirit for having asked for ten golds.

“But in any case, please do prepare to go, Dinne.”

“P-Prepare? Erm, what do I need to do, Kinue... erm, Lady Kinue?” Dinne defaulted to a respectful title, feeling humiliated and beneath all others.

“Do have this,” Kinue said, holding a cup with exceedingly pure water. Given the divine aura it exuded, it was probably holy water. And it was of a quality higher than one could usually ever find. Dinne swallowed hard. One could not imagine something better for a water spirit.

“Th-That is certainly high-quality holy water...”

“It is the highest quality of holy water produced by the Ivory Church. It is about one hundred years old.”

“A-A hundred?! Vintage?!”

Normal water would go bad by then, but high quality holy water from the Ivory Church would last for a thousand years. And on top of

that, its quality would go up over time like wine. Something one hundred years old would have divine power at its ripest.

"It's so high quality... Are you, erm, giving me the right to just look at it?"

"You may feel free to drink it."

"Really? I can! Down it goes!"

She began chugging the water. They had said she could, so she didn't hold back in the least. She won as long as she could finish chugging before they stopped her.

"Fwaah! So good, I'll have round two!"

"Here you are."

More was poured into the cup; once again it filled with the peak of holy water. *Wait, I just asked on a whim, but they're actually giving me more? Okay, well, I'll drink it! I'll drink it forever, I'm an undine!*

"Will I be charged for this later? Like a scam or something?"

"Not at all. You may drink as much as you like."

"Say... what...?"

Today might be the day I die.

Dinne did think it was a bit oddly convenient. But how could she say no? She chugged it down, trembled with joy, and asked for more, with her cup being filled each time.

"U-Um? Kinue?"

"Drink more."

"Erm, right."

Chug chug. Yum yum. More more.

"...Erm."

"Oh, my apologies. A mere cup is too small," Kinue said, bringing this time a mug about the size of her own head. More holy water was poured in. Yum yum, more more, yum yum, more more.

"Erm... Just how much are you going to make me drink?"

"As far as I am aware, water spirits can ignore the volume of their body and absorb more water than they have mass."

"Erm, that is correct, but..."

Just as a forest could store all the rain that fell upon it, a water spirit could contain massive amounts of water within themselves. It was safe to say an undine could absorb a full lake's worth of water. Though it hurt and they didn't usually do it.

"Why not use this opportunity to see how far you can go?" Kinue asked, then brought an entire barrel this time. It was big enough for a person to fit in, and naturally it contained holy water. "Our stocks are still rich, so drink to your heart's content."

"Excuse me?! No matter how delicious it is, there are limits to things!"

"Oh? Have you reached your limit already?" Kinue asked, tilting

her head and opening the barrel's lid.

"I-I can drink more! And I do want to, because it tastes amazing!"

"Your quota is ten barrels, Dinne."

Ten barrels? Did she say ten? This was a big barrel, and ten of them would fill a small room.

"Oh, it seems the advance team has conquered Floor 153. It is impressive that they keep up the pace even at night. And I believe your job will be on Floor 160... Will you be meeting the quota?"

"W-Wait, hold on?! What's going on?! Why do you have so much valuable holy water?!"

"There were several years worth of holy water offered up to the Ivory Goddess beneath the villa."

"O-Offerings?! Th-This is blasphemy! The Ivory Goddess will strike us down?!"

"This is essential for saving that very Ivory Goddess, so it will not be a problem at all."

Using the Ivory Goddess's belongings to save the Ivory Goddess certainly seemed to pose no problem whatsoever. Though Dinne did not see how her drinking it related to saving the Ivory Goddess.

"There are over a hundred barrels in stock, so drink to your heart's content... oh, and the quota is the very bare minimum. You will die if you do not drink at least that much."

"Wait, what? I'm gonna die?"

"I am told you can survive if you drink more than ten, and that the more you drink after that, the better your chances are." Kinue smiled.

"Th-The more I drink, the better my chances are...?" Dinne gulped and looked at the barrels. While she was steeling her resolve to drink, Kinue began clapping her hands.

"Okaaaay, ninety-nine barrels of water on the wall! Chug, chug! Ninety-eight barrels of water on the wall!"

"Wh-What's with that cheering?! You sure are into this!"

"Even I have times where I wish to have some fun. Okay, chug, chug!"

Kinue demanded that she chug the holy water alongside her rhythmic chanting and clapping.

"F-F-Fine! Count me in, just keep bringing more!"

"That's the spirit, Dinne."



And so, after Dinne fit fifteen barrels of top-class holy water into her body, the advance guard reached Floor 160 alongside daybreak. It was Dinne's turn.

"Ngh... I'm gonna hurl."

Dinne had used more parts of her body than just her mouth to suck in the vintage holy water, and with Kinue pulling her she wobbled her way to the gate.

"May your battle be swift and victorious."

"Er, um, okay...? What?"

Speaking of which, why am I even here? I kind of forgot since I was so desperate to chug all that water down. I was a helper or something?

Then, she remembered. And as she looked back up from the ground, she found the rotten face of a Giant Zombie in front of her. "Gyaaaaaah?! Z-Zombie?! So dirty! Don't get near meee!" Dinne screamed, stepping back and falling on her butt. "Ah, crap, it's gonna leak out..."

An instant later, the fifteen barrels of top-class holy water that had been compressed within her body burst out, exploding in all directions as if it were Explosion magic. And with that, the entirety of the zombies crawling throughout the floor were purified in an instant.

* * *

It was day two of the battle. I awoke to the eruptive sound of water bursting. It seemed something had happened on the front lines.

"Good morning, papa. Succuma is the cutest being in the world, don't you think?"

"Morning, Soto. Don't flirt with your dad. Do you have the chains on?"

I had taken a nap after getting tired from all the Golem Blade making, and awoke to us being on Floor 160 already. It was a Monster House filled with monstrous zombies just as we had foretold, and so just as planned we wiped them out with a Dinne holy-water bomb.

Soto replayed the recording for me, and wow, it really was an impressive attack. Though I had no idea how or why she recorded it from three different angles with three different cameras.

Not a drop of the fifteen barrels of top-class holy water was wasted; their exploding outwards so fast increased their power, and even turned into a mist that covered the whole floor. No wonder not a single Zombie escaped purification.

"It's customary to splash holy water on a corpse at funerals to stop them from becoming Zombies, so I guess this was like that?" Soto said.

"I call it: Water Blast Funeral."

“Good attack name, papa. I’ll tell it to Dinne and say Succuma ordered her to call it that. Incidentally... I’ve been trying to figure out whether she puked or peed herself here.”

“For her honor, let’s say she packed her {Storage} full of it and just blasted it out on them.”

I patted Soto’s head. Incidentally, although we used fifteen barrels, that was still overwhelmingly less than it would have taken to flood the entire floor. Fifteen was fairly reasonable... although I had to note that a small bottle of top-class holy water was worth one gold. It would probably be good if I avoided calculating how many those barrels were worth.

“Anyway, now is where the real for-real battle starts,” Soto said.

“Yep. Time to work.”

Although we had conquered twenty-five floors on the first day, we didn’t have a map for Floor 161 and beyond, so it was expected we would slow down. There were 29 floors left, which gave us a quota of 15 floors per day, though given any last-ditch resistance and the battle with Haku (Core 10), we would want to reach at least Floor 180 today.

We had an idea of what gimmicks the later floors had thanks to Wataru’s {Ultra Good Fortune}—from there, we had determined what would happen if we attacked as we planned, so all we had to do now was follow through. If the rat exploration went well, it wasn’t a dream for us to break through Floor 185 within the day. So, how far could we go?

Oh, and while I was thinking that and Dinne was looking up in a daze, the additional adventurers and the guide rabbit made it to Floor 161.

“Alright, time to invade Floor 161. I’m doing a recording; take care of the monitor for me.”

“Okaaay.”

I knocked myself awake, and began a recording shown to the entire world.

Wataru’s Perspective

Day two of conquering the [Ivory Labyrinth]. Keima was planning to exploit Wataru the Hero to his fullest once again.

Incidentally, the plan for today’s broadcast was to reveal that all floors above the vanguard were being opened to all. There were gate stones placed within each floor during the conquest, and an additional room was being added in the coliseum which would allow one to go to whichever floor they liked. This would allow adventurers that lacked the courage to go farther to mobilize and add additional

pressure through filling every floor.

“Can’t wait for Succuma to broadcast again! Am I right, Wataru?!”

“Hm? I guess?”

“Uh-huh! Succuma’s so cute... Ah!!! You’re cute, too, Wataru!”

“Thanks...?”

Igni seemed excited from the bottom of her heart for the upcoming broadcast. It seemed she had become a big Succuma fan herself. The same would have been true for Wataru if he didn’t know it was Keima inside Succuma, and if he didn’t have the [Lionheart Bracelet] the imperial family had given him. Plus, Neruneh sure would not have let him off easy for that.

“Are you looking forward to it, too, Neruneh?” Wataru ventured.

“Yeees, I aaam,” Neruneh said, giggling and looking at Igni. Really, when she wasn’t in Dragon form, Igni was as heartwarming as a kid running around telling her neighbors that they should get married when they grow up. “I can do Succubus transformations too with the right iteeems, but Master’s is something eeelse.”

“Oh yeah, you did cast hypnosis on me once.”

“That’s riiight, I used a borrowed {Charm} on yooou.”

Whew. Wataru was glad it had been Neruneh to do that. If Succuma (Keima) had {Charmed} him, he would be so deeply shocked he wouldn’t be able to recover.

“Keima sure had some crazy tricks up his sleeve,” Wataru muttered. The same went for Soto’s gate, but all in all he had the power to grip the entire world by the balls. Really, pairing up his powers with his daughter’s made for some multiplicative terror. It was enough power he could have conquered the world if he wanted to, and it wouldn’t have even been hard. Though he would probably just say that sounded like a pain and that he’d rather be lazy in Goren.

“Should be safe to say Rokuko has ridiculous hidden powers of her own. Keima might even be hiding another trump card, or wait, two, or wait, three even?”

He had said he would be honest about everything since hiding things at this point would be troublesome, but no way did Keima not still have secrets. When Wataru asked if he was a Hero, after all, he said, “That’s not important right now,” and blew him off.

“(Good morning, everyone. This is Succuma, one who protects world peace from a futon),” began Succuma’s broadcast.

“(Just now, due to the help of an assistant from Corky named Unko... Or rather, Lady Dinne, the army of Zombies gathered upon Floor 160 was purged brilliantly. The vanguard has safely reached Floor 161.)”

“Oooh! She blasted a whole mountain of undead into nothingness just like that! Undead are always annoying ’cause they revive if you

don't burn them good, and I thought that water spirit looked super weak, but I guess I was wrong!" Igni exclaimed, as the monitor showed the undead being wiped out. It was being presented in a way similar to TV news back home, and Wataru could only laugh and say that Keima was definitely a Hero. He wouldn't accept it, but Keima didn't seem to be trying to hide it, either.

"(Fortune is on our side. Do continue to provide your assistance for just two more days. And moving on! Henceforth, I have made it such that all floors above the farthest conquered floor in the [Ivory Labyrinth] are available to access, so it might be more completely conquered!)"

Wataru had heard about that ahead of time. The floors which had been passed through rapidly with the rabbit guides were mostly undiscovered, meaning there was untouched treasure and monsters to be slain. There was plenty of bait; what came next was waiting for adventurers to take it.

"(Furthermore, from today forward, rats will be running throughout the dungeon. They are my familiars. Do take care not to crush them if you see them in the dungeon.)"

There was a close-up of the rats. Apparently the strategy was to use rats as scouts.

"Hm? Rats as familiars?"

Something about that nagged at Wataru. Right... Rats. Goren had rat races as entertainment. He had actually seen the rat on screen before.

"Er, Neruneh? Are the familiar rats Succuma's talking about the same ones that work at the inn?"

"Hmmm? Of cooourse. You see them all the time, Wataruuu," Neruneh said, as if baffled he was asking now after all this time. When it came to rats he saw all the time, he only saw those in the game room.

"Erm, so, the rat races..."

"The rats are all professionaaals. They make sure to fudge things so the customers can enjoy themseeelves. When someone other than you is playing, they set the resuuults."

Naturally, any gambling game which an {Ultra Good Fortune} Hero lost often had to have been rigged. One could hardly blame them. Otherwise, he would have won so much he would have been banned.

"You knew that alreaaaady, and came to see them anywaaaay, riiight? Your acting made it seem as if you were gambling without knowiing, and the rats really appreciated iiiit."

"Er, ahaha, well. Yeah, I wanted them to have their fun, too," Wataru said, maintaining his pride and feeling a bit relieved that she

hadn't noticed that he hadn't noticed.

"Riiight, so you'll keep playing with them even after thiiiis, won't yooou?"

"...Er, well, of course."

Thus, he ended up promising Neruneh that he would keep playing. If Neruneh had said that since she saw through Wataru's bluffing, she was quite the dexterous conversationalist indeed. But which was it? In any case, as Wataru stealthily worried about whether he would still be able to enjoy the rat races as he had been, Succuma's broadcast ended.

Haku (Core 10)'s Perspective

The events of Floor 160 were painful but had to be put aside. There was no use crying over spilled milk. More importantly, there were other problems to solve. Gates had opened on every floor up to Floor 161, and a flood of adventurers were pouring in through each.

Every adventurer was fully equipped, and all were on pace to hunt down every single monster in the dungeon. It was only then that Haku (Core 10) realized this was a strategy to prevent him from balling up all the monsters together.

He thought of turning the monster corpses into Zombies, but unbelievably, the adventurers were completely scalping each defeated monster to the point of not even leaving bones behind. Even children were participating as movers, and the smallest parts that were usually left behind got retrieved. The portals allowed them to not need to hold back at all.

"Tch, the absolute vultures...!"

At this rate, retrieving the monster corpses would be next to impossible for the dungeon.

"Regardless, gathering monsters together on this level would hardly change anything!"

A gathering of half-baked monsters would just end up with a repeat of Floor 160. Especially with powerhouses like Core 50 on the enemy's side... Haku (Core 10) made excuses to himself and decided to completely ignore the floors that had already fallen to the enemy.

"Now's the time for patience, dude. No matter how many adventurers you take down, there's gonna be more," Ichika said.

"Ngh! Lesser beings. They have numbers, if nothing else...!"

As Ichika said, once {Treaty} ended, Haku (Core 10) could dump DP into the catalog and kill them all with an invincible army. What he needed to focus on was surviving the next two days. Luckily, perhaps due to their distance from the bottommost level, there were fewer filler floors here.

Of the floors with proper themes, there was Floor 165, which produced Succubi and Incubi en masse. Haku (Core 10) cackled at how horny Haku must have been to make such a floor.

That was a floor I gifted to a subordinate, and one I had nothing to do with.

Some of Haku's memories poured in. It seemed Haku wanted to clarify that misconception enough that she willingly lowered a part of her defenses. Though she didn't leak which subordinate had made it.

"Hmph. Regardless, they are using adventurers en masse. It is inevitable they will begin to fight among themselves. Dolce, prepare to retrieve their corpses. They will become valuable Zombies for us."

"...Yes, my lady."

And so, finally, the enemy reached Floor 165.

Hugo's Perspective

Hugo, who had arrived yesterday from the Holy Kingdom alongside Alca the High Priestess, wept with joy over being hand-selected by Succuma as a powerhouse, and offered up his prayers to her. He then met up with the Last Commune members who were atoning for their crimes in Dragg.

"Aw, shit! You're still alive, Hugo?!"

"I always thought you were the kinda guy who'd survive no matter what shit happened to 'im."

"Hrm? Sorry, the only person I can recognize instantly in this world is mama... Oh, you lot're from the Last Commune. Glad to see you're doing well?"

It seemed the entirety of the former Last Commune had been collectively selected as a powerhouse. Dragg's mayor had been informed, and those participating would have their sentences reduced... Although there had been bizarre kickbacks from some, with them saying, "Mama told me to make up for my crimes! I'll participate, so please, don't reduce my sentence!"

"Why not just accept the reduction?"

"Hah, that's rich coming from the guy who ran away without atoning for *his* crimes. Don't you feel bad for my holy sister (Succuma)?"

"Yeah. We're all ready to spend the rest of our lives as criminal slaves to atone for our sins, just like big sis (Succuma) asked us too!"

"Y'know, there's still time for you, Hugo. Join us. You'll get a chance to be near my beloved daughter (Succuma)."

That was a very appealing idea indeed. However...

"Nope. Mama ordered me to guard Pope Narikin of the Holy Kingdom."

“What the hell?! Color me jealous! But I guess there’s no helping that.”

“Mhm. Big sis’s word is law.”

“The fact you got to meet the queen (Succuma) already is hard for me to forgive, but far be it from me to interfere with her orders. Good luck, brother.”

The former Last Commune members bonded thusly while energetically hunting monsters to all hell. Thoughts of Succuma watching empowered them, and they might have put a little too much energy into it, all things considered.

Today, they had been asked to conquer Floor 165.

“(Everyone from the Last Commune, do your best...! Kiss!)”

A monitor opened for just the members of the Last Commune. There, Succuma blew them a kiss as an advance payment, and they all took it to heart. Nothing would stop them from completing their mission. They wouldn’t even mind dying, but dying meant they couldn’t atone for their sins, so they would strive to stay alive.

“Hrm, so you all are stans for Succuma,” came a voice.

“Ah? And who are you lot... Mama did say we’d have company.” Hugo turned, finding a squadron of knights behind them. There were adventurers among them, too... But they were all wearing bright, colorful cloth. Apparently it was an outfit known as a happi coat.

“We of the Ichigo Fan Club were instructed to make contact with your group. We are experts in defensive warfare, and so we have been put in charge of suppressing areas around the gates.”

“Yep. And we’ll be your opposites, rushing in and killing.”

“Allow as many through as you like; we wish for Ichigo to see our heroic figures.”

“Unfortunately for you, since we’re working for mama here, we might not let even a single one through.”

Both Hugo and the commander of the knight squadron, also known as the head of Ichigo’s fan club, grinned and clasped hands. They were both men of similar creeds.

“By the way, what did you mean by ‘stan’? I haven’t heard that before. Explain what it means.”

“Ah, how do I put this... It is the target of one’s love, I should say?”

“Got it. That’s a good phrase. We’ll use it ourselves from now on. I stan mama.”

And so, with their minds unified, they went to Floor 165. It was conquered easily without a single casualty, thanks to those who had already been charmed by a higher-ranked Succubus, and the hyped-up idol otaku who had experience defeating Succubi.

Ittetsu's Perspective

Ittetsu and Redra had been invited over as powerhouses. They thought Keima was insane when they heard he was going up against the [Ivory Labyrinth], but it turned out that Haku was the insane one. And to rescue her, Ittetsu and Redra would be lending their assistance. They received alcohol and snacks in bulk, and since Igny was already involved, they could feign a lack of investment.

Keima offered a knight statue made of gemstones as thanks, but they refused. It was definitely the kind that moved. Redra looked hungry for it, and there was no point in doubting Keima at this point, but considering the very thing happening with Haku (Core 10), Ittetsu had naturally been forced to refuse.

“Still, this is way too fuckin’ easy. Keima sure is somethin’ else,” Ittetsu said in his gravelly voice.

“Yup! He’s just the man I thought he was... Er, he is a man, right? I’m not fully sure!”

“Keep it together, Redra! All that Sweet Succuma stuff’s just for show; he’s a man.”

Furthermore, Keima had lent them [Chains of Admonition], and they had other anti-charm equipment, so looking at him through the monitor didn’t have an impact. Core 112 wasn’t a Core of the 100 lot for nothing.

Still, while Keima had mentioned having a way to open gates ahead of time, Ittetsu could hardly believe the actual scale of the invasion. In a way, this proved that if any other dungeon made an enemy of Keima, he would be able to conquer them no matter what, regardless of how deep they were.

This wasn’t even a Dungeon Battle anymore; it was a one-sided slaughter.

“The fuck would we do if he did this to our dungeon?” Ittetsu asked.

“Erm... Guess we’d have to stop him at the Boss Room!”

Yep. That was about the only way to stop the invasion one could think of. But there had been Boss Rooms on the previous floors leading up to Floor 135. Keima had somehow gotten through those anyway.

“Water, maybe? But I’m pretty fuckin’ sure boss doors stop water...”

Even if a bit did go through, that’d be the end of it, with only that bit getting through. Buuut... If you could form a gate after getting through just a bit, well. Well. Ittetsu resolved to modify the Boss Room doors when he got home so not even a drop of water could get through them.

Turning back to the monitor, it was showing Core 219 leading an

army of plant monsters to open a gate on Floor 168. However... They were swarmed by monsters. Core 219 used the plants as bait and escaped into the gate, with the monsters following in after.

“Wh-What?! Is that gonna be alright?!”

“Hm? Aaah... It’ll be fuckin’ fine. Watch.”

Once all the monsters were inside, the gate closed for an instant, then opened again. From it appeared Wataru the Hero and Igni in Dragon form, leading a group of adventurers.

“What? Did Igni take care of them? She must be a lot stronger to take down a group like that in an instant!”

“Nah, that ain’t it... Let me just say, those gates are brutal. Real fuckin’ brutal.”

Ittetsu, watching Igni excitedly going on a rampage while Wataru protected the adventurers, theorized on how the gates had been used for violence.

Haku (Core 10)’s Perspective

Floor 165 had been conquered. The silver lining was that he had been able to retrieve the Succubus corpses. Naturally, the adventurers felt resistance toward slicing up monsters that looked just like people.

“Dolce. Gather the collected corpses together. I will make them into a Legion.”

“Understood.”

“What a wretched lot. If only they simply forgot about Core 89 as anyone should. Do they desire this body that much? Erm, well, I suppose they do.” Haku (Core 10) sighed.

Still, how did those gates even work? The invasion was completely one-sided, and Core 10 didn’t even know how the adventurers were being sent into the dungeon. When he tried to attack the gates, Core 50 would just burst out to interfere.

“...Ah! No, wait. What if I were to attack multiple at once?”

Core 50 had only one body. There were several powerhouses on the enemy team, but given how the invaders were cycling through them one by one, there must have been a limit to them. If Core 10 were to attack gates on multiple floors at once, perhaps he could push through at least one to the enemy camp.

In particular, Floors 56 through 136 had mostly been skipped through, with nothing more than normal adventurers there. Haku (Core 10) determined it could work.

“Tell Sally and Amelia that we will be attacking several floors at once.”

“Understood.”

The timing for the attack could be the moment they opened a gate

on the next floor, 168.

And so, just as Core 219 opened the gate, he sent several forces to attack gates on different floors. Including Floor 168, of course. Core 50 interfered on one floor, but 219 pathetically ran away on Floor 168, and bands of monsters succeeded in entering the gate across several floors.

However, an instant later...

“Group A has disappeared. They are off the monitor and cannot be contacted.”

“B is in... a coliseum? There’s... air? Oh, they’re gone, too.”

“There’s no ground, they’re falling—no response. Ah, it’s back, ah, the ground...”

One report of failure came after another.

“Wh-What the hell is going on?!” Haku (Core 10) shouted.

“W-We do not know. It’s chaos.”

“Response recovered—response gone.”

The monsters that had rushed in all at once were completely wiped out... Or rather, they arrived at the enemy dungeon with a time lag, and were murdered one by one with no way to resist. They might as well have just been executed.

Rokuko’s Perspective

“Aaah, I just wanna see Succuma. Why is no one letting me? Grrr!” Rokuko grumbled while turning monster corpses into DP. They were the corpses of the monsters that had appeared above the spiral staircase, then fell to their deaths below.

“(Mama, can I send the next batch of monsters yet?)”

“Uh-huh, keep them coming!”

Soto sent word, then opened another gate atop the spiral staircase area’s ceiling. From it fell Lizardmen, Golems, Minotaurs, and other walking-type monsters, which plummeted right down to the hard floor. They died on impact.

Rokuko retrieved their corpses... But oh, one of them was alive. Hardly, though. Smack smack with some Golems, and done. Corpse retrieved.

“So boring... I just wanna see Succumaaa... Up close, ideally...” Rokuko said with a sigh.

“(There’s no helping it. Some of your dungeon functions have been locked off, mama.)”

That was certainly true, but still. Rokuko pouted.

“Why don’t I just go up there and help look after Succuma?”

“(You’ll just drop your work and push papa over, mama.)”

Rokuko did have confidence that’s exactly what would happen.

Succuma was just way too attractive. She couldn't deny that merely seeing Succuma through the monitor paralyzed her from work.

"Ngh, I want anti-charm equipment, too..."

Unfortunately, Soto was using the one from Ittetsu, and Keima was using those the [Cave of Greed] had for other things. Buying new equipment would have been surprisingly expensive, so Keima said they should just economize.

"Sigh... Gobsuke, pour me some teaaa..."

"Gob!"

Rokuko had Gobsuke, revived through the dungeon functions, pour her some tea to help her calm down. She wasn't able to see the monitor with Succuma, so with no other choice she focused on handling the monsters in the dungeon.

"(My rooms in {Storage} are packed full since they all rushed in at once, so I'll be flinging them out as soon as Core 219 separates the walkers from the fliers.)"

"Kaaay."

When the enemies jumped into the gates, Soto had made it so they wouldn't be able to leave the {Storage} dungeon. The gates were simply made by putting entrance and exit gates right next to each other in the {Storage} dungeon. If she just removed the exit portal, they would be stuck in {Storage} after jumping in.

"The worst part of your dungeon is that once inside, everything freezes."

"(Well, that's just how {Storage} works.)"

"True."

The monsters that jumped into {Storage} did end up frozen in time. You couldn't kill them, but you could make them completely powerless. On top of that, you could put them into a complete dead end, like a room without exits. Because even if it didn't function as a dungeon properly, all one needed was a room-sized {Storage}.

It was a bit annoying to micromanage so many gates, but as the owner of the dungeon, it was nothing to Soto.

"(Dearest Soto. I have finished arranging this room. All those on this side are walking-types.)"

"(Okaaay, thanks Core 219. Here they come, mama.)"

"Uh-huh, don't hold back."

On top of that, as Dungeon Cores were demigods, they could move within the {Storage} dungeon without freezing. Core 219 could thus separate the monsters based on which would die to fall damage and which wouldn't.

After that, one just had to let gravity and the ground take the wheel. Keima called this the [Trap Tower]. Maybe because one dropped them from a place as tall as a tower.

“This job really is easy.”

That said, there were some monsters that wouldn't die from fall damage. Flying monsters, monsters resilient to physical damage, and so on were split by Core 219 and sent to the coliseum. There, they were casually hunted by the Great Demon King's subordinates, who wanted a bit of exercise. Furthermore, the monsters who did not fit into Soto's {Storage} dungeon to begin with were sent there directly.

All Rokuko had to do was dump and retrieve the corpses to turn into DP.

“I'm ready for the next baaatch.”

“(Okaaay. Oh, and split the DP with me later, mama.)”

“(And me as well, of course.)”

“Everyone will get their share, just send the monsters. Sigh... I wanna see Succuma.”

And so, Rokuko's squad destroyed all the invading monsters without sweating in the least.

Redra's Perspective

Redra, the Dungeon Master of the [Flame Caverns] within Tsia Mountain, and a Red Dragon herself, was having an excellent time within Floor 175 of the [Ivory Labyrinth]. To describe the floor generally, it was over two hundred degrees Celsius with a humidity of 50%, making it a paradise for fire-elemental beings; she hummed as she stomped on bubbling pools of magma, while sipping Magma Slimes and nomming on flame-wrapped Flame Minotaurs passing by with her husband Ittetsu.

“The perfect place for a date! The [Ivory Labyrinth's] not such a bad place after all!!!”

“Well, to fuckin' you and me.”

This was the kind of place that would burn a normal human alive in seconds, demanding flame-resistant armor. There were heat-themed environments in upper floors as well, but this place was even higher effort. Not to mention, fire monsters attacked and intensified the heat further. One could guess this floor had been a test to see how inhospitable a dungeon floor could possibly be before it stopped functioning.

That said, this was only a brutal environment for humans. For a married couple consisting of a Red Dragon and a Salamander, it was like going on a date down a well-paved road. It even came with free snacks and drinks in the form of fire monsters.

“■■■■, ■■■■—{Summon Lantern},” Ittetsu chanted lazily, causing a Fireball-esque fire spirit to appear.

“Hrm! What are you summoning on our date?!”

“You fuckin’ for real? We’re not here on a date, we’re doin’ shit for Keima.”

“Oh. Right!!!”

She had actually forgotten. Though, well, no one could blame her for getting excited and having fun when essentially visiting a theme park. Ittetsu sent the fire spirit ahead to investigate the floor.

“He said we can fuck around once we get the place beat, so yeah. Let’s find the fuckin’ stairway and put the gate down so we can go to town.”

“Oh, right! Let’s do this!” Redra roared, spitting fire that gave birth to multiple fire elementals. It was a Dragon language chant. Despite how it may seem, Redra was an elite Dragon that could use magic as well.

Anyway, fire spirits were weak and not too fast, so normally they would get hunted down like nothing, but...

“Let’s go wherever the most of ’em die, since that means they’ve got something they’re protectin’ there.”

“That’s my husband for you! So smart!”

And so, Ittetsu and Redra explored the floor, finding the Boss Room in the blink of an eye.

The boss was an Ifrit, a human-shaped great spirit; however, Ittetsu was higher in rank, and stronger, and Redra was there, too. The fight was hardly worth noting. So to say, Redra devoured him after a comment on how it was lucky to find dinner so nearby.

“So, where’s the boss?”

“Pretty sure that was it.”

“Aaah...”

Redra recalled that they had a similar boss on Floor 25 of their dungeon.

“Look, the stairs. Let’s get the gate stone down. Then we can go on a date.”

“Right, right!!! A date, let’s date!”

And so they conquered Floor 175, put a gate stone down on the next floor, then returned to Floor 175 to enjoy a casual date.

Haku (Core 10)’s Perspective

Their affinity was simply too poor. Even a volcanic hellscape was like a cool spring breeze to a Salamander. But Core 10 had known for some time that a Salamander and Red Dragon were among the enemies. The fall of Floor 175 thus did not disturb him emotionally.

“But why?! Why are Core 50 of the Demon King faction and Core 112 of the Dragon King faction helping her...?!”

A Dragon had been participating from the very beginning, in fact.

And with that... Haku (Core 10) suddenly realized something.

"I see! This is Core 89 we are talking about, the traitor herself! They must be using this opportunity to try and finish her off for good! Am I wrong, Core 89?! You sure are hated!"

Haku remained asleep within Haku (Core 10), providing no comment. She was resolved to her silence.

Ichika nodded to herself, looking at the rate of conquest. "Looks like they're not going for the shortest, fastest route anymore, but man, now this is like a normal Dungeon Battle."

"Ngh... You are correct. This is not good."

The speed of their conquest had fallen since Floor 160, but that didn't change the fact that at their current rate, they would reach Floor 189 before {Treaty} ended.

"We should try and make a game plan. Lady Haku, what's comin' up?"

"Indeed. This was the beginning of a series of elemental floors. Floor 176 is water."

It was half-submerged in water that went up to knee height. However, that would simply make things easier for Undine the water spirit. One could not hope for it to stall them for long.

"Floor 177... looks like earth, huh? Doesn't seem like they've got any earth spirits to me, dude."

"No, they had Core 219. As a plant-type Core, she will have little problem with it, or Floor 178, the wind area. Gah! If a plant Core is here, does that mean Core 7 is involved?"

The plant faction was led by Core 7, the God of Mountains. It wouldn't be strange if their friend Core 9 the God of Oceans was participating as well. There was a water spirit strong enough to wipe out an army of undead in an instant, after all.

"For real, there's a ton of them. Feels like everyone's here."

"Hrm... Mmm?"

Everyone... Core 8, the Beast King? Were there any beast-type Cores? Yes! There was a flood of squirrels and rats. There had to be beast-type Cores involved.

Furthermore, judging by comments from the invaders, some kind of mysterious goddess named Succuma was involved here. Surely they weren't sent from Core 1, 2, or 3. At least, he had heard that while they had three names, they were one being that had surpassed time, or something of the like. In short, they were the God of Spacetime or something along those lines. They were the top three that had received Father's influence more than anyone, and so it was highly likely they were the ones making the gate.

"Hrm? Wait, wait, wait! Does that mean this is...?"

"Sup?"

Core 10 realized it.

The God of Spacetime (Cores 1-3), God of Chaos (Core 4), The Dragon King faction (Core 5), the Demon King faction (Core 6), the God of Mountains (Core 7), the Beast King (Core 8), and the God of Oceans (Core 9).

This can't be...! All of the single numbers are here?!

“Gah! You made too many enemies, Core 89!”

Haku (Core 10) couldn't help but spit with anger. At this point, he had no choice but to buy time, and build new floors the absolute instant that the seal was undone. Or really, the most realistic option would be to abandon the entire dungeon and try to rebuild elsewhere.

“Yo, Dolce, looks like Lady Haku's cradling her head.”

“She is likely thinking about something beyond us.”

“Yuppers. Gotta wait until she calms down... Ooo, man, using water spirits for a water floor just isn't fair.”

Floor 176 had been conquered in the meantime. Floor 179 would probably be the best place for buying time, perhaps? It was a poisonous area. There were poisonous swamps that would kill anyone with the slightest touch, and they exuded a miasma that would kill all those who breathed it. Living beings would break their backs trying to conquer it.

Niku's Perspective

Niku was participating in the invasion through possession and Mannequin Golem Adventurer. It was one of those that had gotten all the way down to Floor 135 in the three days of preparation. Although at that time, they had been relying on everyone available: the monster girls, Elka, Soto, Mayu, and Rokuko's pets. Rats had done most of the work past Floor 55 so they wouldn't be noticed, meaning few floors had needed the Mannequin Golems.

However, it would have been a waste to put so much effort into Mannequin Golems only to abandon them. They had thus been selected to participate as powerhouses. As they were Golem adventurers, they didn't have the name value for reassuring adventurers as Wataru the Hero or Alca the High Priestess did, and they didn't have the aura of strength Igni or Redra did that overcame the obscurity barrier. Even so, the orichalcum-coated mannequin could move exactly as Niku did, and he became known as the Masked Adventurer through his fearless fighting. Still, Niku found this unimpressive, as it was only inevitable that having the trump card of being able to die and be revived would enable one to fight with far more aggression.

“Incidentally, sister? It seems you will be fighting with Lady Leona

this time.”

“Why are you here, Toi? Should you not be with Narikin?” Niku asked; Toi was lazing about in her room for whatever reason.

“I care not for that airheaded pope and his wife. Not to mention that they and Hugo sent me off to be useful to Keima instead.”

Sending away one’s own bodyguard... Was Narikin not aware that he had become the pope? Though all that said, if Narikin canceled his human transformation, there would be few that could assassinate his Living Armor form. Poison would not work against him, for instance.

“So, how is Leona, Toi?”

“I was ordered to murder Lady Leona. Would you like to join me?”

“...Did Master say that?”

“No. Lady Leona did.”

Niku tilted her head. “Toi, were you not ordered to not follow Leona’s orders?”

“It is a rather complex situation. You would not understand,” Toi said with a shrug. Though it wasn’t as if Niku wished to hear an explanation, so fair enough.

“Unfortunately, we are currently fighting alongside Leona. I am told she will play a highly important role. I cannot take you up on your offer.”

“I anticipated as much. But, well, I will let her go this time, as I could not win even if I wanted to. We have unlimited time, so we will meet again one day,” Toi said, giving up as if it was nothing.

“Is that all?”

“Please do not treat me as if I am a bother, dear big sister. I am ever so bored.”

Technically, Toi was participating in the fight as a helper. Her combat prowess did not reach the level of Wataru, but she had above-average swordplay and magic, so she would prove highly useful in floors without any extreme gimmicks.

However, that was only until Floor 160. At this point she was on constant reserve.

“...If you are so bored, why not help with the administration?”

“That is the job of the Succubi and maids, no?” Toi was wearing a maid outfit, but she certainly did not consider herself a maid, apparently.

“If you will excuse me, I must be participating now.”

“Oh, may I partake?”

“Unlikely. The next area is poisonous.”

This was information obtained and confirmed through Wataru throwing blinded darts. Niku controlled the Golem Masked Adventurer, so the poison wasn’t relevant.

“I see. Then I shall accompany you.”

“...Did you not hear my explanation?”

“I did, but poison does not affect me either, so why not? I need only ask Lady Leona for anti-poison potions.”

“Anti-poison potions...”

{Ultra Alchemy} being able to make stuff like that was truly unfair. Although given that she had trained hard enough to reach divinity after many years, it was less unfair and more something worthy of envy.

“Well, do become drenched in poison. I will be participating from afar.”

“Putting it that way is a bit unpleasant,” Toi said, scrunching up her face, but she still intended to go. “Will you not join me by drinking anti-poison potions?”

“No. I have been told not to stand out. I will not stop you from joining, but do not forget to hide your ears.”

“Yes, yes, I know. I am participating as a member of the Holy Kingdom, after all.”

From there, Toi went to get anti-poison potions from Leona; it ended up being a bit problematic, but she ultimately succeeded through negotiations. All they had to do was broadcast on the monitor that they would be conquering the poison area with potions provided by the God of Chaos.

Uzou and Muzou’s Perspective

The Uzou Muzou brothers had been working as Hunters within the Demon Realm. They saw the floating video of Succuma, and naturally were highly motivated to partake once again. They had participated in both day one and day two, receiving one limited Magic Blade each. They had gone into the shallow levels of the [Ivory Labyrinth] before, and they both felt they had contributed decently enough.

“Y’know, Uzou. I just noticed something.”

“Hm? What’s up, Muzou?”

Muzou looked at the gate in the Demon Realm’s coliseum before continuing. “This gate is connected to the [Ivory Labyrinth], right? And the [Ivory Labyrinth] is connected to all the other gates.”

“Yup.”

“So... If we use the gate in the empire on the way back, couldn’t we cut down on our travel costs by a lot?”

“Ah! Nice idea, Muzou!”

They had just finished paying back all their debts, and were recently talking about how they just needed to earn the cost of a trip

back before they could leave. Of course, not having to pay travel costs at all would be a huge boon. They went back and told their current employer about it, who said seeing them go was a shame, but nevertheless understood the opportunity and gave them special potions as a farewell gift. It seemed he had highly valued how they had taken their jobs seriously without accepting duels and skimping out on work, no matter how provocative people were.

“The Demon Realm wasn’t half bad after all, Uzou.”

“Yeah, Muzou. Strength is everything here, but the girls are cute, too.”

They were cute, but also strong, in various ways. And what they wanted in men more than anything was strength, so as Muzou and Uzou were barely stronger than normal humans, they were hardly popular.

A witch in a bar had said to them, “Men who turn down women challenging them to duels won’t ever score. How about we go a round?” while waving a dagger around, which did make them feel that the girls here were extremely different from those they were used to.

“What, you lot are going home?”

On their way to the gate, Shironaga—a coworker from the bar, and a Weretiger—called out to them. They were with Sukjira, a Warwolf.

“Ah, yeah. It’s a good opportunity.”

“We promised a while ago to go back to town. It has a dungeon and all.”

“Oh, huh, a dungeon! Must be a good place.”

“You can fight forever in dungeons. I’d go too if I didn’t have work,” Shironaga said, to which Sukjira nodded.

“By the way, the boss said he wants you all to stop skipping work to fight.”

“You guys fight every day, yeah... Or training, should I call it? Try not to go overboard.”

“Not happening. Also, training and fighting’s totally different. Besides, we do our jobs eventually, so what’s the problem? Am I right?”

“But y’know, you two really did never fight while on the job. Damn serious.”

They chatted on their way to the gate.

“Why don’t we do this, one last time? You’re just gonna take a different portal out, right? Let’s go together.”

“Yeah. I wanna see how much stronger you two’ve gotten.”

Thus, at their invitation, Uzou and Muzou decided to delve into the [Ivory Labyrinth] with them. This would be the last time they

could fight together, and well, with those two, they could safely hunt on fairly deep levels, probably.

...However, something wasn't right.

"Hm? Uzou, is this how things were yesterday?"

"Well, Muzou, I thought we went to the coliseum yesterday."

Indeed. Today they had been brought to a room filled with an unusually high ratio of Demon Realm citizens. Furthermore, the sharp air of true powerhouses surrounded them. Each was strong enough it was rare to see them even in tournaments.

"Hey, what're you two doing? Let's go to the front, the front!"

"The early bird gets the strong enemies to fight!"

Their two coworkers were totally unfazed, so Uzou and Muzou followed after them. There was the ogre martial artist, Extraorc. Muzou lost to them at the tournament. His rival, Abover Aes, was there as well. The room also had Vampire demon-fist fighters, Elf archers, Spiderkin poison assassins... There was even a Giant Arachnoid that was three meters tall with six arms. At the very least, any of the people there could get far in the tournament.

"Ahahaha! Behold, my Ultra Death Scythe! Wondrous, is it not?! Incidentally, I had this modeled after a design of my creation."

"Wow, Number 564, you're so coooool!"

"Man, scythes are awesome! I want a Magic Blade of my own design, too!"

There was a Baphomet, a goat demon, who judging by the numbered name was apparently a noble.

"Heya, Number 564. Nice scythe. But weren't you banished or something?"

"Hrm! Number 427. Still calling yourself a magic bowman? Don't sweat the small stuff; I just want to show off my scythe. Bwahaha!"

Oh, another noble. "Banishment" sounded pretty intense, so it was probably best to get away from him.

"Everyone, you have done well to gather here," came a voice. Everyone knelt upon hearing it. Even Uzou and Muzou, without a second thought. Looking to the voice revealed an old warrior who looked like Death incarnate, standing atop a shrine one step higher than the rest of the room.

"I-It's the Great Demon King, Number 6...!"

"I-In the flesh...!"

"Th-This is some crazy pressure. Yea, this guy's the real deal...!"

Everyone kept their voices down, but they couldn't contain their excitement, which let Uzou and Muzou know they were before the Great Demon King. Why today of all days did such a major powerhouse have to show up? They trembled and couldn't stop sweating.

“Now then, let us speak of enjoyable things,” the Great Demon King said, flashing a grin. But all one felt from him was anger.

“My rival, the Ivory Goddess, fell for a trap of the Church of Light’s pope... Or rather, the former pope. I will be rescuing her.”

Uzou and Muzou had to wonder what was enjoyable about that, but the eyes of the Demon Realm folks were all sparkling. Apparently a fight to save one’s rival was thrilling indeed. To be fair, they had both thought it was hype when a rival character in an imperial play said to the protagonist, “I will be the one to defeat you,” but... Was this the same? No, it couldn’t be; there was something fundamentally different about the Demon Realm, probably.

“I have prepared a special battlefield for you all—Floor 180, the frontmost vanguard of the conquest, and a floor crawling with boss-level prey to hunt. Fight to your heart’s content.”

...What?

The Great Demon King left it at that and exited the room. Uzou and Muzou were breaking out in a cold sweat in a different way than before. They looked to Shironaga and Sukjira for an explanation.

“Man... I’m so glad we came! Not often you get awesome fights like this! Good thing we invited you both!”

“This is for Demon Realm folks only, y’know? You two sure are lucky! There’s gonna be tons of boss monsters, my dudes!”

They were so excited that basically no conversation was forming. Everyone else was hooting and hollering similarly.

“Er, I mean, well... are we even gonna fit in here? Know what I mean, Uzou?”

“This does seem a bit too heavy for us, Muzou. We should probably back out.”

However, they had already come to the front lines. There didn’t seem to be any way for them to flee the packed room. In the first place, one had to doubt that Demon Realm citizens would permit one to run from the enemy.

“...Let’s just focus on surviving, Uzou.”

“Yeah. Let’s get through this no matter what, Muzou.”

Once this battle ended, they’d go to Goren. That’s what they swore to each other. In the end, would they be able to survive? Not even Succuma could know that.

Haku (Core 10)’s Perspective

The poison area did not stall the enemy in the least, and they finally plunged into Floor 180. It was a massive floor filled with massive boss monsters. Each was strong enough to serve as the last boss of another dungeon. And yet, every invader the enemy sent was a

powerhouse as well.

Although the battle should have been like Dragons fighting Goblins, instead it was like Dragons fighting Wyverns. Worst of all, Core 10 confirmed that Core 6 himself was participating in this battle. The enemy had Dragons as well. There was no stopping them now. Core 10 closed the video of the monsters being slaughtered, and contemplated their situation.

There was one day and ten floors left. In a normal dungeon attack, it would be fairly difficult to conquer even ten floors in three days, but at their current rate they would reach Floor 189 and Haku's neck before long.

"I suppose I shall have to use my trump card," Core 10 muttered.

"Your trump card?" Dolce asked.

"Yes. I will use Suzuki the Hero."

"...Understood. You will be throwing him at them, then?"

"No. It will be his power that I use. Or rather, his body?"

Dolce did not understand what he was saying, and thus did not know what to do.

"Doolce, she's gonna be using Suzuki for something, so how about bringing him over?"

"Ah, y-yes, I see. One moment," Dolce said, leaving her seat to bring Suzuki at Ichika's prompting.

"Ichika... You are fairly useful for a mere human. Once the world is mine, I shall grant you a country."

"To be praised is my highest honor. So, Lady Haku. Anything else you need?"

"Hrm. I suppose an axe or sword would be useful."

"An axe? What'd you want one of those for? That said, I've got the perfect sword for you, dude. It's a Magic Blade that enhances its sharpness!" Ichika said, taking out an iron blade from {Storage}.

"Lady Haku. I have brought Suzuki," Dolce said, coming back. His body was bound to a stand, and he had a gag in his mouth. "I shall release his bonds."

"No, there will be no need for that. Ichika, cut off his arm."

"Roger."

She did not ask why he would order that. Her blade slid through the air, and Suzuki's right arm fell to the ground... and as it hit the ground, it regenerated before blood even gushed out of his stump. Though blood flowed from the fallen arm.

"GRAAAAAH!"

Suzuki roared behind his ball gag. It wasn't that he was screaming from pain; Suzuki no longer felt such sensations. Rather, he was trying to attack Haku (Core 10), simply because he was a Dungeon Core in front of him. He extended his regenerated, and thus unbound, right

arm.

“Once more. The same arm.”

“Roger dodger.”

Ichika sliced off the extended right arm as well.

“Perfect, continue as you are.”

“What, you just need the arms? I’m hella glad I went for a sharpening sword, then.”

Ichika had done work like this before. It was mere ingredient collecting. There were the phoenix eggs, and getting iron from Golem spawners. In short, Haku (Core 10) intended to do something with Suzuki the Hero’s arms.

“Ultra Magic Activate—{Enchant Route: D}.”

One day left. To survive this final challenge, Haku (Core 10) elected to use Ultra Magic.

“Continuing—{Force Create: Angel}.”

Suzuki’s arm glowed with light, and in its place appeared a winged Angel.

“Ooo! Making Angels, huh?”

“Any flesh will do, the same as for undeads. The flesh of Heroes is particularly suitable for this, as they have the God of Light’s power within them.”

Suzuki’s flesh as a Hero’s was especially valuable, and with {Ultra Healing} it could be used infinitely. They could thus make as many Angels as they wanted. Though due to Ultra Magic’s kickback, Core 10 had avoided it until now.

“As many Angels as you want, huh... So, how many’ll that be, dude?” Ichika asked while cutting off arms.

“A hundred. But slow your pace down a bit; I cannot keep up. The fresher the ingredients, the better. That said... You sure seem used to this, hm?”

“Weeell, I’ve just done something like this before.”

“Were you an executioner? Hm, that explains your usefulness.”

Ichika didn’t really understand on what basis Haku (Core 10) was saying that, so she just shrugged it off and went, “Basically.”

“{Force Create: Angel}.”

“Whoop. ’Kay, Miss Angel, go on to this other room here.”

With each chant, one Angel was born. It was put under the dungeon’s control, then directed to a different room by Ichika. By the time the one hundredth Angel was finished, the enemy had reached Floor 182.

“Now then, how shall I use these Angels?”

“Sooo, Lady Haku. It’s not too important, but mind if I say something real fast?” Ichika asked, holding up a hand.

“Hm? Say it.”

“Judging by this fighting style, I’ve got a bit of an idea as to what Dungeon Core’s behind all this.”

“What? You would say it is not Leona? That would be critical information. Who is it?”

Ichika grinned. “Dungeon Core Number 695, my dude.”

“...Oho! Ohooo!” Core 10 clapped his hands together. “Core 695 was Haku’s favorite. And the dungeon whose Master you slayed! That is what you put together? She is here to avenge her Master and Haku!”

“Yup, yup. Mm, guess she’ll remember what her Master taught her even after death,” Ichika said, nodding with a moved expression.

“Heheheh. That Master was the one who sent Narikin, the rat who expelled me from the Holy Kingdom. He must have true brilliance to defy me even after death!”

“I dunno what knowing the culprit will do at this point, but I figured I’d say something anyway.”

“No, no, it is important indeed. Now that I know the culprit, I can challenge them to a Dungeon Battle directly. Taking their head will flip this situation on its head.”

“Hm? But going through the gates doesn’t take you to their base, right? What’re you gonna do?”

“Hahaha! That will not be a problem. The Dungeon Battle will connect our dungeons with a gate of our own making, not theirs!”

And so, Haku (Core 10) challenged Core 695 to a Dungeon Battle. The preparation time with the minimum amount allowed: one hour. One could challenge others to Dungeon Battles even while under {Treaty}’s effect.

“Well, don’t blame me no matter what happens,” Ichika said, then left Core 10 to his cackling.

* * *

One day left. The Demon Realm squadron led by the Great Demon King did great work, and we managed to get all the way to Floor 184.

“Just a bit more,” I said.

“Whew, the Demon King faction folks did way better than we thought, papa.”

The pace was so smooth it was almost scary. I needed to hone my focus, to make sure there weren’t any fatal holes I was overlooking.

“Couldn’t we just have the Demon Realm folks keep going until they reach Floor 189?”

“I’d like to if we could, but they’re really wearing themselves down.”

Leona’s full potions recovered wounds and exhaustion, but mentally and spiritually they were grinding themselves down. We

wouldn't have been able to beat the Boss Rush on Floor 180 without Core 6's hand-selected group of Demon Realm warriors going all out. To be honest, it was the greatest obstacle to this entire operation. And the difficulty of that greatest obstacle left more than half of them *satisfied*.

"...Satisfied?"

"Yep. Satisfied."

The bulk of the Demon Realm group was getting satisfied, and losing their will to fight; the more they pushed themselves to fight anyway, the more they ground themselves down, and fought suboptimally. Perhaps a food analogy would clarify things. Imagine eating until you're full, then being asked to eat more; you'd probably feel like, "not right now, please." Indeed, their three great lusts were sleep, hunger, and battle.

This wasn't an ill effect or anything of the like, so Leona's potions had no effect. We had to be grateful they also conquered Floor 181 as something of a dessert for us.

"For the same reason, Aidy and Sebas are both out. Core 50 and the Great Demon King can still go, but that's really about it."

Even Core 42 of the First Lot and his master Cerberus had ended up dropping out from satisfaction.

And then, a monitor appeared before my eyes.

"(Keima, there's an emergency!)"

"Hm? Uh, Rokuko? I told you not to open up video calls like this."

"Ah, ah! Um, um, I'm sorry, Succuma! I love you! I love you so much!"

Yeeep, she's {Charmed} now. No crying over spilled milk, though. Let's just get to business.

"So, what do you need?"

"(Oh, um, I got a Dungeon Battle request from Haku! What should I do?)"

"Really? That's convenient... Accept it."

"(Okay. I'm accepting it! I accepted it! So, why is it convenient?)"

Mm, I would have liked her to ask why before doing it. {Charm} truly is fearsome.

"He just challenged us to a Dungeon Battle because he can't produce monsters of his own and desperately cobbled together a force to try and cut off our heads. If we can make him waste his forces outside the dungeon, won't that be a pretty heavy blow to him?"

Really, I had been planning to challenge him to one soon. His going out of his way to tell us that he had amassed his final desperation force just made things more convenient. Not to mention, if he opened a gate to a lower floor than we had conquered, we could use that as a shortcut for attacking.

“(Then we need to prepare for the Dungeon Battle and fight back. I’ll get right on that.)”

“Uhhh, nah, nah. We have Soto, so we’re invincible in Dungeon Battles,” I said, waving a hand.

Rokuko tilted her head. “(...Invincible? Wait, what do you mean?)”

“Think about it. What’ll happen if we cover the Dungeon Battle gate with one of Soto’s {Storage} dungeon gates?”

If we put a gate in front of the Dungeon Battle gate, Soto could put the monsters anywhere. That didn’t have to be constrained to the dungeon. She could put them in some far-off plains, or the bottom of an ocean. We could even put them back into the enemy’s dungeon as a joke.

“So basically, their monsters will never be able to reach our dungeon, ever. There’s no point in attacking at all.”

Meanwhile, we could flood in water from the bottom of the ocean, or send in monsters in one direction. Naturally, just like what had happened when they tried to go through the gates in the [Ivory Labyrinth], we could split the monsters by type and kill the walkers with gravity.

Basically, if one used Soto’s power without restraint or hesitation, you could do some cheap things.

“(...Hm. How are you supposed to beat that, anyway?)”

“I mean, I called it invincible, didn’t I?”

At this point, their only option would be to skip on the gate and search for the dungeon to invade directly, but if they could do that there wouldn’t be any need for a Dungeon Battle in the first place. Just like how we were already invading the [Ivory Labyrinth]. And if they did come, we could still use a gate to send them flying anywhere. They would open the door and find themselves outside again.

“You know, papa, I think I’m a lot more dangerous than I realized.”

“That’s right, my dear daughter. You’re so much of a cheat that if we don’t hide your existence, everyone will try to assassinate you.”

The strategy had only one weakness, and that was Soto herself. Our strategies were completely reliant on her, so if she were eliminated we wouldn’t be able to use them. She could hide in the dungeon during Dungeon Battles, but there was the risk of her being targeted outside battles, too.

Even if she didn’t get assassinated, it was obvious that someone capable of feats like this would be targeted for countless reasons. It only made sense to keep Soto close to my chest and hide her involvement.

“Oh, so that’s why you went for Succuma instead of

Sototemporarily. I thought for sure you just wanted to show your cute self to the whole world.”

“Hahaha, don’t make me laugh.”

I’m putting my whole life on the line for this, too... You’ve made daddy sad.

“Oh, papa. How about we use this opportunity to throw them over to the Great Demon King’s dungeon?”

That came out of nowhere.

“Why the Great Demon King’s dungeon?”

“Aidy was talking about it, and it sure sounded interesting. Don’t worry, I got the Great Demon King’s permission! And we can broadcast it, too!”

I didn’t know what would be interesting about his dungeon, but I got the feeling sending them there would certainly be more reliable than trying to take care of them ourselves. After all, it was the dungeon of none other than the Great Demon King. And if she had already gotten his permission, not sending monsters ran the risk of violating some promise or another.

“It will be our first-ever foreign movie imported and broadcasted! We’ll be bringing in the big bucks soon!”

“Do you even know what you’re saying? Anyway, getting the Great Demon King’s permission before talking to me basically shows you knew you could do this already... But sure, go ahead.”

I couldn’t lie, I was interested in seeing how the Great Demon King’s dungeon would get rid of enemies.

“Yaaay! Okay, mama, that’s how it is!”

“(Well, if it’s what Succuma wants, there’s nothing more for me to say.)”

Mmm, we really need to get the {Charm} off Rokuko.

Haku (Core 10)’s Perspective

The Dungeon Battle with Core 695 began... And was a disaster.

Core 10 opened a gate on Floor 185, and sent half his Angels through it—fifty. They went safely through it, and arrived within the enemy’s dungeon.

“The Angel squadron has arrived at the enemy dungeon, and... a dead end?!”

“Ngh, an earthquake?! Th-The Angel squadron has suffered massive casualties! The healing cannot keep up!”

“What?! Angels can fly, a mere shaking of the earth should cause them no harm! What is going on?!”

A look showed the Angels being slammed hard against the walls, floor, and ceiling of a room. It was a trap room which flipped gravity

in all directions, and on top of that, there were spikes and blades growing all over the walls, so that all Core 10 could see was the Angels getting stabbed and cut all on their own.

One could hardly tell what was going on in that meat grinder, but there were no enemy monsters.

“It’s a death trap room! Get them out!”

“B-But this is the first room, and... Th-There is no gate?!”

“What?!”

The [Ivory Labyrinth] still had its gate. In which case, the enemy’s gate must have disappeared... Or wait, no! Only then did Haku (Core 10) realize they had acted with utter foolishness. The enemy could use gates regardless of Dungeon Battles, and they obviously could have placed one in front of their Dungeon Battle gate such that any invaders would walk right into it.

As soon as he realized that, enemies began flooding in from the gate on Floor 185.

“Shit, shit...! Ichika, begin slicing off Suzuki’s arms! We’re making fifty more!”

“Roooger, coming right up.”

Core 10 began making Angels out of Suzuki’s arms again. The burden of Ultra Magic was heavy, but there was no helping that. He would be shifting them to fight on the defensive front this time.

“Dolce. You bring the remaining Four Braves and buy time—fear not, I will revive you all once this situation is over. You may die without worry.”

“Yes, my lady! Understood,” Dolce said, bowing her head and accepting the order. To be honest, Haku (Core 10) was doing that almost purely out of spite.

“Now, Ichika. Do you seek power?”

“Hm? Nah, dude. If I had any, you’d send me to die, too,” Ichika said, casually rejecting his suggestion. Haku (Core 10)’s eyes widened.

“You...”

“If you’re thinking of using me as a test subject for somethin’, how about using Suzuki or one of those strong-by-default Angels instead? They’d be way more useful,” Ichika said, interrupting Haku (Core 10). And she was entirely correct. Using an Angel as a base would boost the power of the final result. She was right.

“...Hrm? Ah, yes, you have a point.”

“Calm down, girl. Deep breaths. You know how to use the right people for the right job, right, Lady Haku?”

“Yes, yes. I of all people seem to have lost my cool. How shameful.” Haku (Core 10) shook his head to calm down. “In any case, I will modify an Angel into my trump card.”

“Sweet. How many arms you need? Or do you want me to cut off

his whole lower half?"

Suzuki would regenerate no matter what you cut off. But by this point, even the insane Suzuki had come to understand what Ichika was doing, and was flailing to escape. Though he was bound too tightly for that.

"Hm, let's see. Prepare ten arms and five lower halves."

"You got it."

Ichika raised her Magic Blade, and approached Suzuki with a grin. He didn't feel pain, and yet he was still afraid.

* * *

The [Ivory Labyrinth], Floor 187. They were finally here. I finished broadcasting as Succuma, canceled my Succubus transformation and {Ultra Transformation}, returning to my normal form for the first time in a long while.

"Whew, the Great Demon King's dungeon sure was something else, huh?" Soto said.

"That death trap was something else. Talk about brutal."

The trap activated as soon as the Angels arrived. The gate stone got wrapped up in it and hit a wall, exploding into dust, but the Great Demon King himself had used a monitor to show us the trap so we could see what was happening.

"The branch dungeon, [Giant Demon King Statue]. A massive Golem with a Dummy Core as its core, huh?"

The death trap the Angels had been sent to was in fact its clenched right fist. All the Golem had to do was shake his hand around. That alone destroyed all that was within.

I used Golems myself, but that was on a whole 'nother level. Its main problem was that it couldn't go too far from the main dungeon, the [Demon King's Castle], but even so when it came to defensive warfare you could hardly do better.

"Yeah, I don't want to make an enemy out of him."

"Uh-huh."

That had probably been the Great Demon King's intention to begin with; he showed us the video to break our spirits ahead of time before we ever ended up as enemies. Or to hype up the Demon Realm folks, maybe.

"Anyway. I'll start fighting from the next floor on."

Our preliminary research had shown that we would want to challenge these final floors with a small group of elite fighters. And I would be in each group. As myself, too; not in Succuma female form.

"You're not going to go as Succuma? You could just win if you {Charmed} them."

"I have several reasons for it, but most importantly, if Succuma

can't {Charm} given opponents, she turns into nothing but a debuff blob that weakens everyone around her."

Not to mention, in fights I really needed to use my own self. Narikin wouldn't have enough mana capacity, for instance.

"Well, bye bye then, papa. Oh, and as for my payment..."

"That can come after we rescue Haku. There's still one last job to do."

I had Soto connect a gate while I stealthily hid the socks I had removed before transforming into a box. Its destination was Floor 187, the front lines. From this point forward it was a straight line. You could call it the final Boss Rush, from Floor 187 onwards.

By the time I arrived, the other participants of our squad were already there.

There was the Masked Adventurer, controlled by Niku, alongside Misha, and... the Great Demon King, along with Core 50. We were challenging this floor with just the five of us. I broke out into a cold sweat over whether Niku had been rude to them while I had kept them waiting.

"Sorry for the wait," I said.

"Ooh, Keima, it has been a while! You are keeping up your training, I hope?" Core 50 asked before anyone, casually. It was a bit of a relief to see he wasn't angry.

"Ever since then I have been holding a Try and Hit Me Three Times Festival each month, commonly known as the Keima Festival, and it is rather enjoyable. Though only the first time ever succeeded."

What the heck kind of nickname is that? And they're doing it every month? At least do it once a year. Er... Oh, wait, he can read minds. I forgot.

"Hahaha! Doing it once a year would certainly hype things up more! Alright, the next time I win I will use that excuse to change it to once a year! Do come and participate!" Core 50 declared, slapping my back. *Heh, thanks to the Divine Quilt, that doesn't hurt at all. Though I can feel the shock waves.*

"Whew, finally it's time for meow to shine... I never thought you'd make it this far, Keima. Or that you'd drag meow to Floor 187."

"Er, well. I picked the participants through darts, so you'll have to give it up."

"I can't believe I'm actually invading Haku's dungeon. And with the Great Demon King, too," Misha said with a big sigh.

Given that Wataru's {Ultra Good Fortune} selected her, there was probably some enemy she'd be a perfect fit against.

At that moment, Niku the Masked Adventurer came over and spoke to me through telepathy. "(Master. Core 50 saw through my disguise...)"

“Guess he can read minds even when you’re possessing a Golem, huh?” I asked. Thinking about it, he could read my mind when I was transformed into a sword, so that made sense.

“Well, not like it matters. Core 50 is on the dungeon side of things.”

“(…But I wanted to finish things as a mysterious adventurer from nowhere. It would have been so cool.)”

“Oh, that’s what you meant.”

A common problem, maybe. Niku had been having surprising amounts of fun with this.

“Now, let us go, young one,” the Great Demon King said curtly, then began advancing. Hmm. Having him as an ally was heartening, but at the same time terrifying. I would rather have had Aidy here. She was too satisfied to be useful in battle anymore, but well, you know.

Subsequently, what awaited in Floor 187’s Boss Room was a flood of Angels. They were all flying in the air and clad with shining armor. The sparkling of their wings made me recall Rokufa after meeting the God of Light. The light was weaker here, but they must have been infused with the God of Light’s power. There were over fifty of them, maybe a hundred, and they all swarmed down on us once we entered. They had swords, spears, axes, halberds, staves, and bows and arrows, which each shone just like their armor.

You know, we on the Demon King’s side being surrounded by Angels really made us look like the baddies. Though we were always on the dungeon side anyway.

“Oho. Angels, hm? A worthy opponent. O King, might I request a blow from thee?”

“Indeed—{Dimension Hammer}.”

The Great Demon King lifted up a massive blade. He swung it down, knocking down all the magic attacks that had been flying this way, and crushing the upper halves of the Angels with an invisible, enormous hammer. I blinked, thinking things might have ended in a single blow, but...

“...They are healing. Just as those who came to the right hand did.”

The crushed top halves of the Angels regenerated like deflated balloons being filled with air.

“This seems like it will be enjoyable, O King!”

“Quite. Let us go, Core 50. Misha—they will die if you continue killing them until they cease recovering.”

“R-Right, meowzers! I’m coming!”

And so, those of the Demon Realm charged toward the Angels. (That included Misha.) The Masked Adventurer followed after them. I

supported them with magic—a Gatling gun of {Element Bursts}.

The Angels blandly continued their attack without saying anything, even after taking hits like the Great Demon King's. Even opening holes in their chests with {Element Burst} just saw them regenerating in seconds. Even the light armor did. Did that mean the armor was part of their bodies? Oh, a swarm was coming my way. As you would expect from Angels, they were a bunch of androgynous beauties, but their lack of free will and completely blank expressions made them come off as zombies. The Divine Quilt knocked their spears off and made their blades ineffectual, leaving me completely unharmed. Their arrows of light plopped to the ground and disappeared into golden dust.

However, one of the Angels' wings shone brightly, and shot out an arrow. It was more forceful than the other arrows, but the Quilt would handle it... Or so I thought, until the Great Demon King shot his hand out from the side, grabbed the arrow, and snapped it in half.

"Young one. They have Divinity. If their wings shine, do not let your guard down."

"Oh, wow. Thank you."

Divinity. That kind of attack went through the Divine Quilt's ultimate defense. A single hit wouldn't be too bad, since it still did some defense, but several at once would probably kill me.

The Masked Adventurer came this way while knocking aside arrows. "Master. There's no end to them. What do we do?"

"Their healing sure is something else. Suzuki's power, probably?"

Even if we cut their arms off, they just swooped back into existence. There was no end to them. That is, until Misha bit one of the Angel's hands and ripped it off.

"Mgh!" she gulped, swallowing it down.

"Hey, you're gonna hurt your stomach."

"It's fine, meow! That was a {Drain Bite}!"

Hm? I looked at the Angel that Misha had bitten, and it wasn't regenerating or bleeding.

"I see. Draining their energy before they recover is certainly more efficient. Core 50. Use {Theft}."

"I enjoyed having such a long fight, but very well! {Theft}!"

An instant later, Core 50 and the Great Demon King used some kind of skill. It seemed like the light in the Angels' wings dulled.

"It seems effective."

"Aim for the wings and armor, the Angels themselves have no divine power—perhaps their wings are their true self?"

"Roger, meow!"

The Demon Realm squad began energetically slaughtering the Angels.

“(...Ah! {Storage}.)”

“Hm?”

The Masked Adventurer opened their {Storage}, or rather a gate.

“(Master, I prepared a room for captured enemies. If you throw an Angel into here, we can capture them.)”

“Oh yeah, that was an option.”

Their Divinity meant they wouldn't be frozen, but at that point the dungeon could handle things themselves. We could even borrow the Great Demon King's dungeon again. As an experiment, we tossed one inside. And... it froze. Perfect.

I opened my gate and called out to the Great Demon King. “O Great Demon King! I ask that you throw the Angels into this gate! And if we can't handle them on our own, I would like to borrow your dungeon again.”

“You have been heard.”

Moments later, the Angels began whipping through the air as they were flung into the gate. As one would expect from the Great Demon King, his aim was perfect, and I got to witness the oddly pleasant sight of Angels being flung into a gate I merely opened.

“Oho, so we are stealing them! This is trivial. Allow me to join you.”

“Nyahaha! Let's fight to see who can throw the most in!”

Core 50 and Misha began throwing the Angels in as well.

The Masked Adventurer and I were basically the goal nets in a soccer or basketball game. It was like pot ball, where you got points by catching things in pots. I played it in elementary school gym class.

Once we found the path to victory, things ended quickly. The Angels within Floor 187 were stuck in {Storage}, and the path forward opened.

“Now then, young one. I must remain here.”

“Indeed. Though it would be very heartening to have you with us.”

The Great Demon King was following the plan we had set to begin with. It was a plan to force Core 10 into a duel with us, under the threat that the Great Demon King was waiting nearby to destroy his Core if he fled. This way, we left a very narrow avenue of escape through his killing us then killing the Great Demon King next. There was no way he could do that after being backed this much into a corner, but leaving a chance was possible.

In practice, those of the Demon King faction would not hesitate in the slightest to destroy Haku's core. They were enemies to begin with, and in Demon Realm culture killing an ally to save them from brainwashing would indeed be saving them.

“...Go forth.”

“Indeed. Go forth, Keima. If we advance, Core 10 will flee to a subdungeon, no? And that will force us to destroy the Core.”

“Thank you both.”

“Good luck, meow!”

I bowed in thanks to the Great Demon King, Core 50, and while I was at it Misha advanced to Floor 188 with the Masked Adventurer.

There I placed a Gate Stone, and the next wave of partners came out. They were Alca the High Priestess, Toi, and Core 219.

“Oh, you are here as well, your holiness Narikin?”

“Been a while, Alca. I’m Keima, not Narikin. He’s my little brother.”

“Ah, yes, that was the story?” Alca asked with a small smile. She still believed that Narikin and I were the same person, somehow. *I’ll need to have both of us show up in front of her in the same room or something... Though she’ll probably just end up saying a miracle split us into two and we’re pretending to be brothers?*

“Sister, will you be participating in that body? My, what a coward. Did you know? In the other world, they call cowards ‘chickens.’ You are a chicken dog.”

“Say what you like; these are Master’s orders.”

Stay friendly, now.

“Incidentally, Keima, it seems my beloved younger sister Succuma is still broadcasting outside; how is this happening?”

“Simple. It’s a recording.”

“I see. Hence the weakened charm.”

That’s right. I was participating in this battle partly to create an alibi proving I wasn’t Succuma. As Core 219 said, the recording diminished the Succubus power, but at this point we didn’t need the charm doing work anymore. Just to be safe, I had recorded several variations for Soto to play at intervals.

“Alright, on we go. Floor 188 time,” I said. We opened the Boss Room door, and inside were just three people.

Sally, of the Four Braves. Knight Commander of the Laverio Empire.

Similarly, Dolce. Head Spymaster of the Laverio Empire.

And finally, Amelia. The... Uh, wait, what did she do again?

“(...I believe the Lamia was in charge of the Merchants’ guild. And the underground coliseum.)”

Oh, neat. Thanks for the telepathic info, Core 219.

So yeah, basically, the Four Braves minus Misha. Such was his defense against us.

“You have done well to come here; your techniques have been bizarre and effective,” Sally said.

“Perhaps I should not have spared you... Or in other senses, it was

correct to have spared you.”

“You just looked at me like, ‘Wait, what does this person even do,’ by the way,” Amelia said.

What the?! She can read minds, just like Core 50?!

“It showed on your face, Lord Keima,” Toi corrected.

“Oh, really? Well, whatever.”

I faced the three of them anew.

“Well then. If you surrender quietly, I, in my name of Keima Goren, the Pope of Beddism, guarantee your safety. What will you do?”

“Apologies, but we were told to die,” Sally said, coming swinging at me first. The attack was blocked by Toi and the Masked Adventurer.

“Now, now, this one seems fairly troublesome. Sister, we shall fight as one.”

“(It’s frustrating, but we have to. Try not to hold me back.)”

“You expect two to be enough against me? Hah. We will see about that.”

It seemed the three of them had decided to fight one another.

“And the other two?”

“I shall handle the Lamia, I suppose,” Core 219 said. “Miss High Priestess, the Wraith I shall leave to you.”

“The Wraith? That thing is a Wraith? Hm... She must be concealing her power. However, that is convenient for me.”

Oh, both of you are locked in even though they didn’t agree to it? Well, alright.

“Well, looks like I’m a fifth wheel, so I’ll go on ahead. I leave this to you gu—”

“That will not do, Keima!”

Oh, Dolce sent a magic attack over. I canceled it with {Element Burst}.

“Tch, no good, huh?”

“Just accept the battle. It is three versus five, and you have the advantage,” Amelia said, shooting arrows this way. This time, I dodged them with the Divine Pajamas. You know, it felt like those arrows had Divinity in them, just like the Angel’s. Were the Four Braves all fit with Divinity too? Maybe as subordinate gods to the Ivory Goddess.

“Okay, Plan A then.”

“Understood, Keima,” Alca said.

“Indeed. I shall show the world my spectacular power,” Core 219 declared.

Thus began the battle... and instantly, gates appeared beneath our enemies’ feet.

“Wha?”

“Erm?”

However, Dolce and Amelia managed to react to them. Dolce was already floating, so she didn’t fall, while Amelia expertly used her tail to grab onto the edge of the gate... Only for the gate to open further, causing her to fall in.

Incidentally, no comment on Sally, since she got sucked in immediately in one go. Though it wasn’t her fault, since a gate had suddenly appeared right where she was trying to land after a jump.

“Erm, it seems I no longer have a place to show my spectacular power?”

“Lord Keima. My sister and I have lost our foe as well.”

“(Master?)”

What? I took care of the enemies; don’t look so unsatisfied.

“Thanks for distracting them. Now, let’s beat the crap out of the last one now that they’re alone.”

“Erm... Keima, this may be a bit much,” Alca said. Even she was put off by this.

Oh, come on! This was the plan from the start! Literally Plan A! The Four Braves are being brainwashed, so the priority is to get them in a gate or bind them with magic or something so we don’t have to hurt them! All that happened here is we managed to get two at once with a surprise attack at the start, what’s the big deal?!

“(Whew... I did a pretty good job there! Oh, and papa, I put them in the specially made jails, so they can’t escape! They can still move around in {Storage}, just like we planned for.)”

“Thanks, Soto.”

The two of them were in a jail specially made for them, coated with orichalcum. We needed another way to capture Dolce since she was a ghost and could slip through walls, but a holy-water-filled Dinne was in charge of that.

“So, want to make things easier and just let us catch you?”

“As much as it pains me, I must decline.”

And so began our duel with the final member of the Four Braves, Dolce.

Move one. I ran out of the Boss Room at full speed, with my back turned to Dolce.

“Ngh! I will not let you get away, Keima! Lady Haku has ordered me to capture and eliminate you without fail!”

Dolce chased after me. Just as planned. This was why I was here at all—to serve as bait. After all, I was the spitting image of Narikin—or I guess, he was the spitting image of me—and basically, that meant Core 10 couldn’t ignore me.

On top of that, he thought he had killed me. In which case, there

was no blaming him for getting stupid with desperation to take me out. I opened my {Storage} gate and leapt in myself. For the record, it was slightly outside the Boss Room.

“Ngh...!”

Of course, Dolce didn’t follow me inside. She had just seen her allies captured by gates, and if she went outside the Boss Room it would cease functioning and we could get through.

“By the way, Dolce,” I said, popping my head out. “Even if you don’t do anything, we can reach Floor 189.”

“What?! Wh-When do you... You’re bluffing!”

“Bluffing? Come on now. How many Boss Rooms did we slide through just like this on our way to Floor 135? Do you know how I opened gates at your feet anyway? Were there stones on the ground or something?” I asked. Dolce faltered. “I’ve got an ally on the inside. Ichika sure does good work, doesn’t she? Let me guess, she shined your shoes? Nah, she would have been way more subtle. Hahaha.”

“Wha—”

“Did you think I hadn’t noticed Ichika was Haku’s spy? Really? I obviously planned around it. This is me we’re talking about, y’know?”

Dolce visibly began to panic.

“Listen up. If you’re going to betray someone, do it at critical moments like this, when it will settle your victory. I learned that from you and your failure! Farewell!” I declared, disappearing back into the gate.

“H-Hold it right there!” Dolce shouted, following after me.

Aaand... she ended up in Dinne’s holy-water-filled stomach.

Too bad. It was all a lie. Sorry.

I was all like, “This is me we’re talking about, y’know?” but I had in fact not noticed Ichika was Haku’s spy, and it was as simple as Soto being able to open her {Storage} within that range. My massive mana capacity let me expand the range like that. Once again, hiding one’s true power was proven valuable. Also, Sally was close to the Masked Adventurer, so there you go.

Oh, but it’s true that we could reach Floor 189 no matter what Dolce did. We had a butterfly-net-esque net we could have caught her with.

“Y’know, the problem about betraying someone is that it gets a lot harder for other people to trust you. Must be rough for you right now,” I said to Ichika, who might not have even been listening. I would use everything to my advantage, and that included a traitor that wasn’t even here.

With Floor 188 now empty, we advanced forward. Alca and the others complained about having lost their opportunity to show off at the end, but well, fastest was best.

Haku (Core 10)'s Perspective

"Lady Haku, looks like Dolce got hella dunked on."

"Hmph. Useless fool."

He had seen it all. Certainly, he had ordered her to kill and capture Narikin, but never did he expect her to be blasted into oblivion so trivially. Sally and Emelia had been imprisoned in a jail with neither sound nor light, while Dolce was soaked in holy water and unable to move.

In other words, the Four Braves were overhyped trash mobs. Completely useless. And since they had not been killed, he could not even return them through the revival mechanism.

"Dolce sure is an idiot. I've got a contract, so how could I betray anyone? Am I right?"

"Indeed. The price of betraying our contract is death, and that includes all of your family. For that, you have my full trust."

Core 10 took a moment to confirm Ichika was still bound to Haku by a powerful contract. Slaves were far more useful than incompetent monsters.

However, even they had bought enough time. He would have liked to have time to rest if he was being greedy, but nevertheless he had finished his trump card. All he had to do now was chant the final spell. His only option at this point was to fight them off in Floor 189's Boss Room. If he did not, then the Demon King faction lying in wait would destroy his Core. He did not want to die, when he had narrowly managed to survive by possessing Haku.

"Y'know, Lady Haku. Wouldn't it be better if you took this trump card and really shook them by finishing it in front of them?"

"Ah... Good idea. I do not know how much time it will buy, but it may be enough. Also, bring Suzuki; the trump card has a high affinity with Angels. I shall mass-produce Angels in front of them and send them plummeting into the pit of despair."

"You got it."

Haku (Core 10), Ichika, the trump card, and the bound Suzuki left for the final line of defense... Floor 189's Boss Room.

* * *

Now, onto the final floor. Floor 189. It was finally time for the big cheese; the last boss fight.

Participating in this fight would be me, the Masked Adventurer (Niku), Wataru, and Leona... plus Rokuko.

I left behind Alca the High Priestess, Toi, and Core 219. They wouldn't be able to keep up with us—or rather, Wataru's fortune-telling had said it would be best if they didn't come.

“Whew, I’m glad Heroes aren’t required to go on a quest to slay the Great Demon King,” Wataru said. “His dungeon was something else. It gave off a whole, ‘you can’t escape from me’ vibe.”

Yeah, the entrance gate did disappear immediately.

“Say, Keima? Why is Rokuko suddenly an Angel?”

“Watch it, bub. Are you trying to flirt with her? Don’t tell me you forget she rejected you a while ago.”

“No way! I mean, she literally has wings, doesn’t she?!”

Indeed. Rokuko was physically an Angel today. Or to be precise she was possessing Rokufa, whose hair we had dyed blonde. Also, her armor was Narikin. It would be polite to not comment on the fact her chest was a bit bigger than normal. She was wearing the Divine Nightcap she had received from Narikin as a hair ornament. The nightcap could be anything as long as it was attached to a head.

“Oh my, Rokuko was an Angel all along?” Leona asked.

“It’s possession.”

“Oh, I see.”

“...Oh, I see?”

Leona understood instantly, whereas Wataru naturally didn’t since it had to do with dungeons, but he accepted it anyway.

“Wataru, I’ll lend you this.”

“Hm? What is this... a blanket? I-It’s so light, it barely feels heavy at all.”

“It’s the Divine Comforter. It has healing properties, which should help. Wear it as a cape.”

Incidentally, I was wearing the Divine Quilt and the Divine Pajamas, while Rokuko had the Divine Nightcap and Divine Underwear on. I had borrowed the quilt from Rokufa since her armor-adaptability skill gave her orichalcum-level defense.

But yeah, to summarize the squad—there was me and Wataru, then Leona as a Hero, and Rokuko as an Angel. Niku was a Hero’s descendant... which was true for Toi, but considering that she was the Master of a Dungeon Core with Hero powers, she was closer to Heroes than her. In short, those closest to the God of Light had assembled.

We must be about to fight the Demon King... Wait, the Demon King faction’s on our side. Never mind.

“Now, now, I wonder what’s going to show up?” Leona asked, giggling to herself. She must have noticed the common denominator as well. In any case, she would be giving us the power to fight against Ultra Magic.

“Ultra Magic activate—{Enchant Route: O}. Subsequently, {Force Copy: Enchant 3}.”

Rokuko, Wataru, and I were enchanted with magic.

“(...? Leona, I did not receive anything.)”

“Don’t be ridiculous, I couldn’t enchant a Golem, too... Ah, it’s no good. I can’t move,” Leona said, suddenly crumpling into a squat. She looked sick. Apparently she really was down for the count. “I guess being ‘technically possible’ really was the same as being ‘practically impossible’...”

“Er, d-do you want a potion? I mean, you’re the one who brewed them, but.”

“It won’t work on Ultra Magic’s kickback... More importantly, Enchant only lasts one hour, so hurry up and go already,” Leona said, shooing us away. While she was at it, she took out a comforter from her {Storage} and wrapped it around herself. Oh yeah, Leona had a Divine Comforter of her own.

“Er, I don’t know what to say. Thanks?”

“All I want is for you to finish things quickly. The sooner you do, the faster I can feel good again... Urgh, I’m gonna hurl.”

“R-Right.”

“(...I see, this is why Toi could not participate.)”

We left behind the sickly Leona and headed to the final Boss Room. A valuable fighter had ended up leaving our forces, but enchanting us with Ultra Magic was more than enough of a contribution.

In the Boss Room, Haku (Core 10) was waiting languidly upon the throne. To his side was Ichika, and the bound Suzuki. And... something covered in cloth.

“Took you long enough. I suppose I should congratulate you on ravaging my dungeon in just three days,” Core 10 said. They were already enchanted just like we were. I could feel it.

“Hmph, Narikin. When did you steal my ultimate technique, Ultra Magic?”

“Oh, you mean me? Well, whatever. Let’s get started. Oh, what, will you be nice and give back that body?”

“Laughable. Ichika, begin.”

“Roger. Hyup.” Ichika peeled off the cloth covering the thing, and revealed it to be... the God of Light.

“God?!”

“Hold it, Wataru. Something’s not right. That’s a fake,” I said. A close investigation would reveal it was shining much less than the real one at the Holy Kingdom. That one had shone so brightly your eyes hurt, while this one was about as bright as a light bulb.

“You are correct. However—{Force Create God: Fake God of Light}.”

Create God. Core 10 chanted the incantation, and the fake god’s illumination brightened.

“...!!!” It let out a soundless scream.

“Ahahahaha! Now, Heroes! You face a fake god created with all my power as the God of Magic!”

“Uh, this is my first time hearing about any God of Magic.”

“Keima, he just said ‘heroes,’ right? That means you’re a—”

“Does that really matter right now?! It’s coming!”

The faux God of Light lifted a foot... and disappeared. Or so I thought, but suddenly it was beside me.

“Ngh, whoa, fast,” I got out as it punched me hard enough to fling me aside. The world slid by me horizontally, until I slammed into the wall and stopped. The wall didn’t shatter, but my ribs which had been kicked creaked—if not for the Divine Quilt, I probably would have exploded.

“Keima—” Wataru began. He was the next to be punched. He at least managed to guard a bit, but in the end he was still flung horizontally until he slammed into a wall.

“(How dare you hurt Master.)”

This time, the Masked Adventurer came swinging at the God of Light. It stood still and took it. The Golem Blade was made of orichalcum, but it took the impact on the neck and didn’t even budge. Niku slammed it against its neck over and over, producing nothing but clinking sounds, and not even making a half-millimeter cut. But even then, it must have found it annoying, as the fake God of Light swung its hand. The Masked Adventurer evaded the blow at the cost of an arm, which dug into the ground.

“Hahaha! It’s pointless, all pointless! Not even an orichalcum blade can harm a god!” Haku (Core 10) cackled. I looked over there, and saw the insane Suzuki groaning into his ball gag, while Ichika watched our fight.

“Lady Haku. How about making some more Angels?”

“Ooh, an excellent idea, Ichika. Prepare the arms.”

“Roger, roger,” Ichika said, slicing off Suzuki’s right arm. It fell to the ground, and a new one grew out of him. That explained why his right arm alone wasn’t bound.

“{Force Create: Angel},” chanted Core 10, and Suzuki’s arm turned into an Angel. That explained how he had made them. He used the body of a Hero, a disciple of the gods.

“Ngh, sure is convenient to have infinite resources...!”

“Ahahaha! Have you just now realized how valuable this human is? Jealous, hm? Hm...? Now, watch as I make even more Angels! {Force Create: Angel}.”

The wings of the newly born Angels embraced the fake God of Light’s light and shone. Ah, crap. I never realized that Suzuki would be such a convenient source of resources. I had been looking down on {Ultra Healing}.

“Eep, K-Keima! They’re coming! Hyah, gate, gate!”

The Angels were a new threat, but we had one who could counter them—Rokuko. Our Angel’s wings were also glowing from the fake God of Light’s light. Thus, Rokuko could fight on the same level as them. Or better, even, since she was enchanted with Ultra Magic. She smacked down the charging Angels, and knocked them into a gate.

“...So you are that Angel from before. Troublesome, but how will you fare against your sisters? Go!”

“Hmph, I’ll knock them all down!”

A horde of Angels descended upon her, but Rokuko expertly got each into {Storage}.

“(Papa, these Angels can move in {Storage}! What do I do?!)”

“Toss them out by the Great Demon King or the High Priestess!”

Their divinity must have been powered up by the fake God of Light.

“(Roger! Great Demon King, High Priestess, we humbly request your help!)”

And so, the Angels were sent elsewhere—to Floor 187 and Floor 188. They had nothing else to do, so they might as well help. They might complain later, but nothing mattered unless we won this fight.

“Ow, ow... Keima, are you alright?!” Wataru asked, coming this way.

“Honestly, I’m just surprised you’re alive.”

“It’s probably thanks to Leona’s Ultra Magic. If not for it, I probably would have frozen up just from the fake god’s pressure. I have to say... I can’t believe Kuro can fight like that.”

“It’s not her body, and there are spares, so she knows death doesn’t matter.”

Thus was Niku Kuroinu, a loli with a spirit more suitable for being a Hero than mine, for she could charge down a stronger opponent than herself. Plus, she had already experienced death while possessing Kobolds a ton of times, so she could move easily even when sensing death approaching. She was already on her tenth Mannequin Golem from this fight alone. Each time she was destroyed, a new one instantly came through Rokuko’s gate.

“By the way, how many more of those Golems are there?”

“Who knows, I made a lot of them... But unfortunately, the metal used for them is pretty rare. There might not be too many left.”

In any case, Niku was distracting the fake God of Light, while Rokuko was distracting the Angels.

“Wataru, you know our objective here, right?”

“Yep.”

We put our focus on Haku (Core 10).

“Hah, naive—{Force Gravity}!”

The dark weight of gravity suddenly slammed onto us. But it was not too much to bear.

“{Force Levitation}!” I shouted back. My body became light in an instant, and we were freed from the gravity. In return, though, my organs squeezed and hurt. That must have been the kickback.

“What?! You have mastered it to that extent?!”

“I had some lessons from the God of Chaos.”

Or more accurately, I just remembered Leona chanting that during the Ivory Villa battle. Gravity versus levitation. Basically, you just need to attach Force to whatever effect you wanted. It’s a fuzzy chant just for Heroes!

“Ngh, how annoying... Fake god! What are you messing around for?! Take Narikin down first!” Haku (Core 10) called, and so the fake God of Light’s target changed.

“Wataru, go! I’ll be a decoy!”

“Right!”

Just as I heard Wataru’s reply, the fake God of Light punched me again. It hurt. It hurt real bad. And I had two pieces of the Divine Bedding healing me! And I mean, it helped, but still!

While I was somehow surviving, Wataru reached Haku (Core 10).

“Uwooooh!”

“Ngh, what can a single Hero do?!”

Haku (Core 10) blocked Wataru’s attack with his staff. His target had naturally been the accessory on his thigh, which was Core 10’s true body.

“Suzuki! Pour forth your power, all of it!”

“Graaaaaah!” Suzuki roared. Haku (Core 10)’s body was healed with {Ultra Healing}, and then used the overflowing power to force Wataru back.

“Bwahaha, you are no longer fighting me alone! Your choice to come as a small force has now betrayed you!”

My time to help, then. I took the fake God of Light’s attacks and shot an {Element Burst} at Haku’s thigh. But it was deflected by a mana wall.

“Pointless, it’s all pointless! You’re doooooomed! Ahahaha!”

Crap. Those clothes he’s wearing probably use the wearer’s mana to boost their magic defense. This analysis crossed through my mind as the fake God of Light punched me into another wall. *Argh, my stomach!*

I happened to roll up to the Masked Adventurer’s feet, uniting the two of us. “(Master, should we put him in a gate, too?)”

“No, that won’t work on this guy!”

Maybe due to the Ultra Magic, I could feel it in my bones... This guy could break dimensional walls like {Storage}. Considering the

danger that would put Soto in, we couldn't risk closing him up in the {Storage} dungeon. We could send him somewhere, but he would destroy wherever he was sent. He could only be dealt with by those of us using Ultra Magic.

Good grief, what a monster this guy made!

"Lady Haku, here's some more arms," Ichika called.

"Hahaha, that Angel and Wataru are both strong, but can quality beat quantity? {Force Create: Angel}."

Suzuki's arms were being dismembered, handed over, and turned into Angels one after another.

"Ngh, I can't, reach it...!" Wataru grunted. He cut down Angels with his Holy Blade Air, but they healed instantly. Literally instantly, unlike those we had fought with the Great Demon King. Maybe it was due to Suzuki being nearby, or maybe it was due to the fake God of Light... or maybe both. And even if one tried to cut off their shining wings, they were not corporeal and could not be cut. Despite the fact their armor could somehow block attacks.

"Wataru, cut Ichika down!"

"What?! Ngh, r-right!"

"Yo, I think I'm gonna pass on that. Lady Haku, do me a solid!" Ichika said, fleeing instantly.

"Hrm, I suppose there is no other choice." Haku (Core 10) blocked Wataru's attack. He hadn't hit Ichika, but it was fine; ending the supply meant no more Angels.

"Niku, distract him again—{Create Golem}." I drew out the orichalcum from the Golem wreckage at my feet and mixed it into the Masked Adventurer. That would make her even more powerful.

"(You can count on me)," Niku said with a nod, standing between the fake God of Light and I. "(Master (Succuma) is much more of a god than this fake.)"

...Niku, did you watch the broadcasts and get charmed?

"Wataru, duo attack! Match with me!"

"R-Right!"

"Fake god! Get them!"

"...!!!"

The fake God of Light came swinging at me, but the orichalcum-enhanced Masked Adventurer blocked the blow. Although their surface cracked.

"What?!"

Haku (Core 10) balked that the Golem that lacked even Ultra Magic enhancements had blocked a blow. In an instant, Wataru and I reached Core 10.

"HYAAAAAH! {GIGA SLASH}!!!!!!!"

"Hyup! {Force Convert: Orichalcum}!"

Matching the timing of Wataru's swing, I opened a tiny bottle and sprinkled orichalcum dust on Suzuki while activating {Create Golem}. Suzuki was enveloped in orichalcum, then completely closed off. Thus was one of my hidden techniques, Orichalcum Coat. The chant was purely a bluff.

"Haha! I turned him into an orichalcum statue. Now you can't farm Suzuki for materials!"

"What?! Convert Orichalcum?! There is Force magic I did not know of?!" Haku (Core 10) barked, while deflecting Wataru's attack. It seemed he was less surprised by Suzuki turning into an orichalcum statue and more surprised I had used magic he was unfamiliar with.

"Keima, couldn't you have just frozen Haku or the fake god with that?" Wataru asked.

"Don't be stupid. It would only work on Suzuki and Ichika," I replied. Haku (Core 10) could just {Teleport} out of it, and the fake God of Light would have smashed through the thin layer of orichalcum. I was also desperately bluffing since said fake God of Light would destroy the coating around Suzuki if they knew that's all it was, so shut up already.

"Ngh, curse you, Narikin! You stole the Holy Kingdom from me! You use magic I do not know! And you have taken away my infinite resource producer! Just how far will you impede me?! Unforgivable!"

"Who cares if you don't forgive me? Looks like all your Angels have been tossed out t— Guh!"

The fake God of Light punched me away again. Crap, I forgot about him. My ribs got broken again. The Masked Adventurer had finished their job stalling him and got destroyed.

"Fake god! Punch him to death!"

"Wait, hold, crap!"

I took out an orichalcum shield and blocked the blows. The Divine Quilt would dramatically lessen their force if I blocked them with the shield. Buuut... with each punch, the orichalcum-coated shield bent inwards.

"Keima!"

"Ah! Rokuko!"

Rokuko, having finished cleaning up the Angels, flew in between the fake god and me to protect me. But hold on, if his blows could bend this orichalcum shield, no way could she endure them.

Instantly, I used {Teleportation} to get between them.

"{Teleportation} without a chant?! Narikin, you are far too powerful for whom you claim to be... however!"

"K-Keima?!"

"Kemial!"

"(Master!)"

The fake God of Light's fist pierced through my stomach. Yeah, that was gonna kill me. I could feel my blood draining just like it had a week ago. That was that. I didn't even need to do that, either, since Rokufa dying wouldn't have caused any problems.

That said, I was transformed into myself with {Ultra Transformation}, too. I had a spare life, and would revive after death. But my dropping out of the fight here made our chances of victory plummet by quite a bit. After all, we didn't have a plan for this fake God of Light. Not even the Great Demon King could probably beat him. This was kind of bad.

"Hahaha, good, fake god! Now destroy his soul, so he can never revive again!"

Wait, fuck you, I never heard about any technique that can break souls. Oh, crap, I can feel him building up power. This isn't good. I need to flee somehow, before he does it...

With the fake God of Light's arm still piercing my stomach, I elected to copy Haku (Core 10)'s chant. I didn't have much time left before I fell unconscious. I kept it as short as possible—

"...I offer up my flesh and blood. {Force Call God: God of Darkness}."

I'll leave the rest up to you, Father. Save Rokuko and the others in my place.

And so, my consciousness and body faded out from the world.

God of Darkness's Perspective

Amid a pitch-black night sky, two people were floating and facing each other.

On one side was the God of Darkness, a dark-skinned, black-haired man with half his face—his golden eyes—covered by a mask. He was clad in dark blue priest robes, and had a faint smile on his face. On the other side was Keima, for some reason wearing the jersey he usually wore when sleeping.

"(Good grief. You shouldn't be sacrificing your own body like that, Keima. Don't you know it's wrong?)"

"...Er? God of Darkness?"

"Yep, it's me."

If one looked around, they would see nothing but pitch-black darkness. But Keima and the God of Darkness were glowing in some way which made them visible. It was the exact opposite of the white space the God of Light had been in.

"Now, Keima. You sacrificed your body for this, but do you have any last words?"

"Er. First of all... Did I die? What about my {Ultra

Transformation} revival?"

"You died. And since you became a sacrifice to a god, your {Ultra Transformation}'s revival effect won't activate," answered the God of Darkness.

There were special attributes to being a sacrifice to a god. If one offered their flesh and blood, then the powers and such granted to that body were offered up as well. Naturally; one could hardly say to a god, "Oh, but actually, could you leave this part behind?"

{Ultra Transformation's} revival was like a curse embedded in the body ahead of time, so the revival effect was considered part of the flesh and blood.

"...Huh. Well, I didn't know that."

"I figured you didn't. The {Ultra Transformation} skill is granted directly to your soul, so it'd be easy to think the revival effect is also based on your soul. But, well, it all ended up sacrificed anyway," the God of Darkness said, nodding to himself. "So your body vanished, and you won't revive! How does it feel?"

"A bit surprised, honestly," Keima said, rather calm.

"(Oh, just a bit?)"

"Yeah, I guess. Anyway... Where even am I, then? What happened to Core 10?"

"Mm, this is a bit like life after death... yet not quite. Think of it as a divine realm? Anyway, the flow of time is different here, and time stopped the moment you summoned me. We have plenty of time," he replied. "After our chat, I'll descend upon the earth for as long as your wish and body allows. I'm willing to pass on a message for you when I go. I'm your ally here, after all," he continued, smiling at Keima.

"So let me ask again. Do you have any last words?" the God of Darkness asked, spreading out his hands to either side and waiting for Keima's reply.

Keima thought for a bit, then spoke. "Alright then, a message to Rokuko. 'I leave the rest to you.'"

"I see. Anything else?"

"Oh, no. I told Rokuko what to do if I died," Keima said casually.

"Come on, that's cold. What about a message to that dakimakura puppy of yours?" the God of Darkness asked, feeling let down.

"I mean... y'know? All I did was die," Keima replied, causing the God of Darkness to sputter and burst into laughter.

"How bold. Talk about being resolved, Keima."

"I mean, I said as much. I told Rokuko what to do if I died. I went into this prepared to die. Though I didn't actually expect it to happen. It hurt so bad I thought I was going to die, and then I did."

"I see. Well, if this is all part of your plan, then I won't say anything more," the God of Darkness concluded with a shrug. "I'll be

descending onto the earth, then. But you know... Why not summon the God of Light? You are a Hero, after all."

"I'm a Dungeon Master, so I figured you would be better. And I know you."

"You know me, hm? But you've met the God of Light too, haven't you? And twice, directly."

"Eh... He shines so bright I can't really see his face properly," Keima said. The God of Darkness burst into laughter again, this time doubling over and clutching his stomach.

"Hahaha! It's true! He sure is an idiot, shining that much just because he wants to hide his face! Don't you think a mask like mine does just fine for that? This mask does cause a lot of misunderstandings, but still."

Keima was a bit surprised to learn the background lore that the God of Light shone so brightly just to hide his face.

"I had no idea. That's his reasoning?"

"Yep. Having secrets makes you look more divine, doesn't it? Well, he's working hard in his own way. Working hard to stay bright and cheery, that is! Bright and cheery...! That was a pun, okay? Please laugh."

Keima forced a smile. However, that was apparently enough for the God of Darkness.

"Well, see you around, Keima."

And with that, the God of Darkness descended upon the earth.

Rokuko's Perspective

"Keima... Keima?!"

After being pierced by the faux God of Light, Keima muttered some kind of chant. His body then abruptly disappeared. And in his absence, the room was shrouded in the darkness of a night sky.

"What? Narikin, what did you do?!" Haku (Core 10) cried in a panic, looking up at the sky. So did the fake God of Light; it sensed something and looked up. Rokuko and the others did too, and saw a figure in the air.

"Well. It's me; do you have anything to say?"

The voice resonated directly in their heads, and the figure became visible. It was a dark-skinned man wrapped in robes the color of the night sky, with a mask hiding his face. He lightly descended to the ground and smiled; it was the God of Darkness himself, Rokuko's father, whom they had only ever seen across the monitor before.

"Father?!"

"...God of Darkness!"

"Heya, Rokuko. Oh, what's this? That's not what you usually call

me, Core 10. Could you be in your rebellious phase?" the God of Darkness asked with a smile. He definitely knew Core 10's plans.

"How blatant... Fine. This accelerates my plans, but regardless... Give your seat to me, God of Darkness! I have a trump card that can parallel the God of Light!" Core 10 declared.

"You mean this?" The God of Darkness created a hand out of darkness, and grabbed the fake God of Light's head.

"The fake god... is not responding?! But why?!"

"They don't remotely look alike; this thing might as well just be a shining pile of meat. The God of Light would never permit this, it's not good enough at all... That was how I understood it," the God of Darkness explained, but Rokuko's group didn't get it at all. Haku (Core 10) did seem to get it, however.

"You understood it... Simply by developing a certain perspective, you stopped my magic, my fake god?"

"Well, sure. I do rule over creation. There is nothing this world I cannot make, and what I consider no good, no one can make. Do you understand? If you are aiming for my seat, surely you understand."

Upon receiving the God of Darkness's polite explanation, Haku (Core 10) glared at him with renewed hatred. "You... You changed the fabric of reality, didn't you?! All to reject... reject my god!"

"Yep. The God of Light would be pretty mad if he saw this thing. At the very least, make it a bit more cute. Don't you agree?" the God of Darkness asked the Masked Adventurer (Niku).

"(...W-Well. I do think it should be more cute,)" Niku said, reading the mood. The God of Darkness smiled with satisfaction at that answer.

"That's right. So, now there's a rule that if you try to exploit a god's power by creating a copy, you need permission from the god in question. Errrm, what do they call this... Likeness copyright, I think? Is that right, Hero?"

"Ah, erm, well. Something like that, yes."

The God of Darkness tossed the fake God of Light aside with a smile. It crumbled on the ground, and did not move, despite the fact it had been so violently running around just moments before.

Changing the fabric of reality, the rules it operated on, was far too much of a cheat.

One could say that this rule meant the fake God of Light would move again if the true God of Light permitted it, but would he do so when he did not like Core 10 and had given him various penalties? Likely not.

"Well, that's how it is. You can make idols to worship as you like, but if you want to use their power, hold a proper ritual first. The God of Light may not seem like it, but they're very shy."

“But the God of Light shines a lot and sticks out a ton, Father.”

“They shine because they have to. Watch over them kindly, but not so much your eyes give out,” the God of Darkness said with a smile. At that point, Wataru noticed something.

“The shy-ning shy-boy...”

“Oh, very good, Hero. I’ll tell the God of Light you said that.”

“Wait, hold on, please don’t!”

The God of Darkness heard Wataru’s whisper and teased him for it. The air was light and the mood was bright.

For everyone except Core 10, who was burning with rage.

“Grrr, awful, awful, awful, awful! You will solve everything by a god descending, a *deus ex machina*? Nobody seeks such a convenient conclusion, not myself, not the world! The world should belong to men!”

“Oh? Should the God of Magic be saying that after making a fake god? That would have been way too convenient for *you*. You sure have been exploiting the God of Light quite a bit until now.”

“My plan was to become the final god and end everything! There was no shame in exploiting even the divine to that end! Get back to your divine realm already and stay there, God of Darkness!” roared Core 10.

“I would like to, but before that I have to finish what Keima asked me to do. Rokuko—I’ll be saving you.”

“Er, um, okay. Father.”

“You already eliminated my false god! What else will you do?!”

“Oh, the false god thing was just me getting peeved. If you call that ugly lump of meat the God of Light, people might think I’m just like it. I got rid of it incidentally.”

“Incidentally...?”

The God of Darkness had just *incidentally* changed the rules of the world to eliminate the ultimate trump card. Core 10 shook with fear. The God of Darkness was just on another level.

“This is why higher-ranking gods are only rarely allowed to visit the earth. Our influence is too strong, and we casually change the way of the world without thinking. That’s why we usually have to stay holed up. It’s annoying to try and minimize our impact. The creator god will be displeased if we change too much,” the God of Darkness muttered.

“What?” Wataru asked. “You rule over creation, but there’s a creator god above you?”

“Nice eye, Hero. I’m just borrowing the creator god’s authority for this. Since he’s aalways asleep. Just like Keima, you know?” The God of Darkness chuckled. “Anyway, Keima traded his life for this. Normally I wouldn’t be able to interfere, since this is Core 10 and

Haku, but... This should be safe,” he continued, then snapped his finger.

“...Hm? What did you do?” Core 10 demanded.

“I temporarily sealed all magic on this floor, and separated it from the rest.”

Silenced magic. That was a fatal debuff for Core 10.

“Wh-Wh-What did you say?! Quit joking around! {Gravity}, {Curse Ball}, gah, none of it works! That is clearly too great a reward for the price paid!”

“Not at all. Keima, a magician on the level of the God of Magic, sacrificed his life twice over, including his revival. That’s more than worth a temporary, complete seal on the God of Magic,” the God of Darkness said, casually. “Rokuko. This will do, won’t it?”

“Father? Did you just say Keima sacrificed his revival, too...?”

“I did. Oh, and that means that he won’t revive, even if you wait for him.”

Keima’s {Ultra Transformation} had the effect that he could revive once after death if said death occurred while he was transformed. It had a seventy-two-hour cooldown period, but even so it was active for this death.

“It’s an effect applied to the flesh, just as the transformation is. If one offers up their flesh and blood, the effect goes with it.”

“W-Wait, but does that mean... Keima... died? For real?”

“He died, for real,” the God of Darkness said flatly. The blood drained from Rokuko’s face, and she crumpled onto the ground. He died. Keima? She couldn’t feel the connection to her Dungeon Master. There was a blank empty void.

“Keima died?” Wataru asked. “I mean, he disappeared, but... Wait, he died? Did he trade his life to summon the God of Darkness?”

“(Master... passed away...?)”

A bit later, it dawned on Wataru and Niku as well: the fact that Keima had died.

“Oh, looks like I can’t maintain this divine field for much longer,” the God of Darkness commented. The night sky shrouding the room was getting brighter, and in turn his body was fading. “See you later, Rokuko. And you, Core 10... though we probably won’t see each other again, actually.”

“W-Wait, Father! R-Revive Keima!” Rokuko cried out in a desperate please. The pain ached in her voice.

The God of Darkness smiled. “And what price will you pay for that, Rokuko? You need to pay a price as valuable to you as your precious, precious Keima. Do you have something worth reviving an entire person?” he asked, then turned his back to her.

She couldn’t think of anything. Nothing was more important to

Rokuko than Keima.

“Oh, I nearly forgot, Rokuko. Keima gave me a message for you.”

“A-A message? From Keima?”

“He said: ‘I leave the rest to you.’ Well, that’s the message delivered. Bye bye.”

And so, the God of Darkness ascended up into the night sky and vanished.

Wataru’s Perspective

“I leave the rest to you.” Wataru heard Keima’s message to Rokuko with his own two ears. It was the words of a deceased entrusting all to those who still lived. Wataru still could not process the fact Keima had died.

“Rokuko...” He didn’t know what to say to her. He started extending a hand, but paused. Wataru did not know what to say to someone who had just lost the love of their life.

Rokuko, however, smoothly stood up. “What are you daydreaming for, Wataru?! We need to save my sister!”

“Ah! R-Right!”

“Niku! Stand up, that’s an order! We’re taking Core 10 down, here and now!”

“U-Understood!”

Likewise, she shook awake the Masked Adventurer (Niku), who had slumped onto the ground.

There was not a trace of her sorrow over having lost Keima. Right, this was their final chance, that Keima had spent his life to give them. He wouldn’t be happy if they let this slip through their fingers. At the very least, they had to save Rokuko’s older sister... They had to save Haku! Wataru headed to Haku (Core 10). His magic had been sealed, Suzuki the Hero had been turned into a statue of orichalcum, and most of all, his trump card, the fake God of Light, had been rendered powerless by the God of Darkness.

Wataru gripped his Holy Blade Air to chop off Haku’s leg. His body was heavy. That must have been due to Ultra Magic and his physical enhancements fading. On the other hand, it meant his opponent’s defenses were weakened as well.

“Gah, I cannot use the Master Room! Ngh, ah, aaaah! Stay away, stay away!” Core 10 wailed, swinging his staff wildly to keep Wataru away. He was done for. He couldn’t run any longer.

“Prepare yourself!”

“P... {Placement}!”

However, at the very last moment, Wataru’s blade sliced through the air. Haku had abruptly vanished.

“He vanished?!”

“Calm down, Wataru, he just ran to the back!”

How had he fled when his magic was sealed? No, now was not the time to think about that. If Rokuko knew where he was, all they needed to do was follow.

“This is him being a sore loser; his last gasp. He must be at the very bottom, in the Core Room.”

“(Let us go.)”

Rokuko’s group marched through the dungeon with firm footsteps. They advanced down the final hall, and soon reached a dead end with a fancy door.

“Is this it? Something’s written on it,” Wataru said. “A... riddle?”

“That’s right! That’s right! This door is Core 89’s true final challenge!” came Haku (Core 10)’s voice from behind the door. “It is the most devilish riddle, which once made her suffer the most bitter of defeats! Core 89 could never forget her frustration, and so recreated it as a [Gate of Wisdom] before her Core Room! If you answer mistakenly, a terrible trap will activate that will kill you all instantly!” he declared proudly.

His voice was filled with confidence, as if he was reading Haku’s memories of that defeat as he spoke. No doubt a problem Haku had not been able to solve would be an iron wall indeed.

“I see, this is a classic riddle,” Wataru said.

“Hmm. But, well, this specific riddle...” Rokuko looked at the problem and giggled. “Wataru, you don’t mind if I answer this one, right?”

“You won’t mess it up, will you?”

“Aha, how could I ever mess it up? Right, Niku?” Rokuko asked, giving a broad smile of amusement.

“(Right. You would not mess this problem up once in a thousand tries,)” the Masked Adventurer Niku replied, with full confidence.

“That’s right. Because, I mean, the problem is so *simple*,” she said, and with that Wataru knew he could trust her to answer it.

After all, the riddle they were facing, written on the door, was quite simply...

—*The answer is simple. You mustn’t think too hard about this. Please tell me how to split one silver coin between three people.*—

...In other words, it was a rather simple trick question from Wataru’s world.

Epilogue — Rokuko's Perspective

Naturally, the door opened without incident. On the other side was a sheet of paper with "Under Construction" written on it... Just kidding, of course. There was Haku (Core 10), standing with an expression of shock.

"But how...?! How did you solve it?! Not even I could solve it!"

"Really? Heh, that's me for you." This, on top of the Holy Kingdom's "most unbeatable dungeon" being a copy of the [Cave of Greed]... Core 10 must have been a genius at flattering Rokuko.

"Ngh, but I can still use {Placement}! I will be fleeing and buying time. After all, you lot cannot destroy the Dungeon Core!"

Ngh. That hit a sore spot. Putting aside the Demon King group, the objective of Rokuko's group was to save Haku, so they could not destroy her Core. It would be difficult for just the three of them to capture Haku while she teleported around constantly to flee.

"Lady Hakuuu, I kinda want my reward now. You mind?" came a voice from behind the Dungeon Core. Ichika popped her head out.

"Ichika?! Why are you here... No, forget it! Buy time!" Core 10 ordered.

"Roger," Ichika said, sliding between him and Rokuko's group. Core 10 began selecting his {Placement} end point.

And then, Ichika spoke again, in a formal tone. "I request my payment: for one minute, don't move."

Core 10 abruptly froze in place. A big grin arose on Ichika's face.

"So? I told you, girl. It'll just take a minute, no prob."

"You, what...?!"

Core 10 looked at Ichika, frozen.

"Oh? Y'know, it looks like I bought time, just like you ordered me to. Now I can ask for another payment. Since you said it could be anything, I'm gonna ask you to stay still for another five minutes. Pretty easy, amirite?"

It was easy. Indeed, it was trivial. Or it would have been, in any other situation.

"Ngh?! ICHIKAAAA?! You betrayed me?! Are, are you not, not afraid of DEAAATH?!"

"C'mon now. You're the one who said I could ask for my payment whenever I wanted, y'know? I'm just followin' the contract and asking for my payments with nothing but goodness in my heart," Ichika

snickered with amusement.

“Good job, Ichika. You were kinda like Keima just now.”

“Just don’t forget the hell a fat stacks of curry bread later.”

“Mhm, you can count on me. The stacks will indeed be fat.”

Rokuko and Ichika exchanged a crisp high five, with a smack resounding through the air.

“What? What? Er, but Ichika betrayed you, didn’t she...?” Wataru asked.

“Yuppers! Just call me Ichika the Betrayer, my dude!” Ichika exclaimed jokingly. Wataru looked at Rokuko, thrown off.

“She did, but she also promised to sign another contract with us after,” Rokuko said casually, as if it were nothing.

It was simple. Ichika had taken Keima’s blade Siesta. The Magic Blade, which had its name on the dungeon’s Named List. Rokuko had thus been able to contact her from a long distance.

“Keima was super mad, you know?”

“What can I say, shit happened fast. Like, out of nowhere I was ordered to kill Master, so like, I knew something was bad. Really, he should be hell a glad I’m so adaptable.”

She had even shown Keima that she took Siesta, which was apparently her way of saying she was waiting for him to contact her. Though Keima was so indignant at Siesta being taken that he hadn’t noticed.

“Also... you should have done this sooner. Keima died, you know.”

“He was using that Ultra Magic stuff or whatever, so I thought stopping him for a second wouldn’t be enough. Hell a lucky that Haku came to where I had run off to, hahaha. Ha... wait, Master died? For reals?”

“Yes, for reals! Oh, go ahead, Wataru. You need to hurry and destroy the garbage on my sister’s leg. If it’s too resilient, go ahead and cut off the leg.”

“R-Right!”

At Rokuko’s prompting, Wataru abruptly remembered what he was here for in the first place. Right, although Core 10 was frozen, it was only for six minutes. He had to hurry.

“Er, well. Prepare yourself...!”

“Wai—”

Wataru swung his Holy Blade Air.

With a clink, Wataru’s blow smashed the accessory (Core 10) that was around Haku’s thigh. It crumbled into dust, and this time, Core 10 was completely destroyed.

Haku, freed from Core 10, wavered and almost fell to the floor as if her strings had been cut. But Ichika swiftly held her up, and saved her head from being hit.

“Ah, aaah... Rokuko, my sweet Rokuko...”

“Welcome home, sister.”

Big tears welled in Haku’s eyes and dripped down her cheeks. “I’m so sorry, I...”

“It’s fine, sister. This is a big happy end, as they say,” Rokuko murmured, hugging Haku and patting her back.

“But, Keima...” Haku said, fretfully apologetic as she stated the one casualty of the battle.

But in response, Rokuko kindly said, “It’s fine, sister. We can have the pope of the Church of Light revive him.”

“What?” Haku blinked. “Erm, but... What?”

“Oh, don’t tell me you don’t know, sister! The pope can use a miracle that revives the dead. Oh, and we’ll be charging you for the cost, but surely that will be fine, right?”

“Er, um, yes...? Yes?”

“Ah! Oh, right, they did mention that!” Wataru exclaimed, having completely forgotten it and only now remembering.

But the former pope was the very same Core 10 that had just been exterminated. On top of that, his revivals had been to turn the corpses into undead which he controlled. The current pope Narikin was made of armor, which Rokuko was wearing, and naturally could not cast any such miracle. Haku was baffled.

However, Rokuko was completely confident that Keima could be revived.

“So don’t worry, sister,” Rokuko said, leaning forward, bringing her mouth close to her sister’s ear, then revealing the trick. “Keima is a Named monster, you know.”

“What?”

Indeed. After all, Keima had come from the 1,000 DP gacha.

* * *

So yeah, I was revived with DP. I remembered the instant of my death and talking with the God of Darkness after dying, so I was pretty sure this wasn’t one of those cases where you died and ended up a different person, just with the same memories. Publicly, we were saying Succuma had asked the pope of the Church of Light (Narikin) to revive me.

Incidentally, my revival cost had been a mere 10,000 DP. So reasonable. I was pretty sure I had learned all sorts of skills... Where’d the price of all those go? Rei had them added—or so I thought, but it turned out all my normal skills were attached to my body and had been offered up to the God of Darkness, leaving only my Hero Skill, which had been burned into my soul. In short, there was just my default cost of 1,000, multiplied by 10 to get 10,000. Okay, it all

added up.

“From now on, 1 Keima = 1 Phenny,” Rokuko declared.

“Wrong, Rokuko. There’s the initial 1,000 DP, so this is one-tenth of a Phenny.”

Also, I had Haku supply scrolls for all the skills I had lost, so the next time this happened it would cost over a hundred million DP.

{Teleportation} and stuff are super expensive, after all.

Everything from Floor 187 and onwards hadn’t been broadcast live, and what we did broadcast was a heavily edited version that had all the scenes inconvenient for us cut, concluding on an emotional scene wherein Haku and Rokuko embraced as sisters. The conquest of the [Ivory Labyrinth] came to an energetic close.

We announced that the gates would disappear and told everyone to leave sooner rather than later. Not wanting to be stuck on the bottom floors, most adventurers left swiftly, and before long everything past Floor 56 was empty of adventurers. The fact the front lines had shifted from the previous bottom depth of 53 was an inevitable sacrifice. Still, the fact that it only advanced 3 floors further was due to Haku briskly beginning to summon more monsters. She’d mentioned something about doing a complete overhaul of the dungeon, which... yeah.

In any case, I was forcibly put to bed. Rokuko said I had just died and hysterically ordered me to actually get some rest. She had just gotten her dungeon functions back, so really she was more in need of rest and recovery than me, but speaking as a Beddhist, there was nothing wrong with getting some rest, so I did just that. I slept on the futon while Rokuko looked after me.

“Still, I’m glad the revival process went okay. Father said all sorts of things when you died... For a bit I thought we really wouldn’t be able to see each other again.”

“He did give hints, you know? Like, ‘if you don’t do anything he won’t revive,’ ‘a fitting price,’ and so on.”

Basically: “Use DP to revive him from the DP menu.” Very indirect. I had told her ahead of time, and after doing hypnosis with Succuma I had confirmed I was indeed on the Named monster list.

“But you died, Keima.”

“Of course I did. You jumped in and I had to protect you on instinct.”

“What, you’re going to blame me? I was possessing a monster, you weren’t. It’s obvious I should have been the one to die.”

“Yeah, it’s my fault for loving you so much I would risk my life to save you in an instant.”

“...Mm. I love you too.” Rokuko plopped her head on my blanket and pushed her head into me.

Things were getting sweet, and just as I let myself start getting carried away by the mood...

“Scuse me, Masteeer!”

“Excuse us; we have brought food and fruit juice.”

In walked the traitor (Ichika) and the dakimakura (Niku). Both were dressed in the cosplay maid outfit which was the inn’s uniform.

“Hold on, you two. You’re getting in the way,” Rokuko complained.

“Aw, c’mon, don’t be a buzzkill. You can flirt all you want now anyway, right? ’Cause I mean, Haku totally accepts your relationship. Y’know?”

“Th-That is true!”

Indeed. Putting aside the fact Ichika had come back like nothing had ever happened, Haku had finally accepted my relationship with Rokuko. Or rather... Apparently she had accepted it a long time ago.

Haku used a gate and came to see me in my sickbed in secret. When she did, I directly asked her to accept my relationship with Rokuko.

After all, I had defeated Core 10, saved Haku, and completely conquered the [Ivory Labyrinth] (plus winning the Dungeon Battle in the process), so I figured Haku had to accept us. And when I told her that...

“Oh my. But I have long since been trusting Rokuko with you, have I not?”

“Er, no, I meant in like... a romantic sense...”

“That is what I am referring to. Though, I have heard through Ichika that you misunderstood me and have not been laying your hands on her as a result,” Haku said casually.

I asked, wait, when, and it turned out ever since my first Dungeon Battle with her. She had sent Ichika to infiltrate our dungeon and make sure I was a Dungeon Master that would genuinely care for Rokuko, and by the third Dungeon Battle Ichika was basically saying, “To be real, you’re not gonna find a better man for her,” and with that she accepted me as a suitable *husband* for Rokuko. Especially after all of Rokuko’s lovey-dovey talks with her.

When she heard that, Rokuko was like, “That’s what I’ve been saying this whole time.” Indeed. She certainly had been.

“Ow, ow... Man, my back still hurts where you stabbed it, Ichika.”

“That’s rough, dude. How ’bout I give it a big kiss to make it all better?”

“Quit joking.” *What’re you saying in front of Rokuko?*

“Nah, I’m for real. I’ll do it. And so would Rokuko. I mean, I did the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, y’know?”

“Mhm. I trust Ichika with this.”

“Uh, Rokuko. Is your trust filter completely busted?”

“Excuse me? Haku formally gave Ichika over to us, it’s fine. She’s ours now.”

From now on, Ichika would in fact be like, uh, how to put this, a kind of Misha-esque figure for us. Thanks to my learning that Haku accepted Rokuko and I, she didn’t even need to hide. Though this also meant that if I ever cheated, she would know instantly. Not that I planned to.

“Nah, man, go ahead and cheat. I mean, you beat Haku head-on, whaddaya gotta be afraid of?”

“Don’t be stupid. If Haku got serious, she’d send Dolce over. The only defense we have against her is Soto, and she’d be seduced by a single pair of Haku’s socks!”

“Then I guess our next step should be focusing on making anti-ghost defenses? Let’s do our best, Keima!” Rokuko suggested, happily. As to why she was so happy... Well, it was strengthening the dungeon. That tended to be the kind of thing dungeons liked.

“Aaah, I’m so sad. I tricked Core 10 all for you, y’know? I let you hear the spell for making Angels, AND the spell for making a fake god. You summoned the God of Darkness all thanks to me, y’know?”

“Er, right. Though I’m pretty sure I would have managed to figure out {Call God} either way.”

After all, it was ninety percent combining what I already knew, and ten percent modifying the spell.

“All my hard work...”

“Sorry, traitor. But well... Welcome back. Nice courage, daring to show your face around here.”

“Yup, the curry rolls you make are the best, so I just couldn’t stay away! Also, take a good look at my face,” she said, grinning. *She could use a good punch.* “So, Niku, what’s up? You’ve been like, scraping the edge of that futon for a while now.”

“...This futon is broken. I can’t get inside.”

Aah. That was because it had the Divine Quilt, too. I lifted up the blanket, and Niku crawled inside, still in her maid outfit.

“Hold it, Rokuko. You’re fine with Niku going in there?” Ichika asked.

“She’s a dakimakura, why would it be a problem?”

“I’m a dakimakura, it’s not a problem.”

“She’s a dakimakura, so definitely no problem.”

“...Guess it’s a little late for me to be asking that.”

Extremely. Don’t go asking about that this late in the game.

“Now that we’ve solved the problem with Haku... When will you use the Divine Bedding?” Rokuko asked.

“Right... Good question. It’ll just be me sleeping through it, so I

suppose I might as well use it now.”

“Okay, I’ll borrow what we need from Maiodore. Let’s do this fast, since the sooner the better with these things. You’ll be sleeping for two whole weeks, so yeah.”

So it’s finally time for me to give up on being a human, too.

“Using the Divine Quilt means I won’t be able to go inside the bed either then, doesn’t it?” Niku asked.

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“Grr...”

I wouldn’t need a dakimakura while conked out for two weeks, so enjoy the time off.

The next day, Maiodore, the daughter of Tsia’s archduke, lent the Divine Pillow to us. We had the Divine Bedding—the mattress, the blanket, the quilt, the pajamas, the underwear, the nightcap, and the pillow. All the pieces had been collected. It was so beautifully divine.

“Go on, Keima, do it. Or do you want me to dress you?”

“Nah, there’s the underwear, too, go ahead and get out.”

“Fine, fine... Well, the next time we meet, you’ll be a god, too!”

With that, Rokuko left.

“I’ll prepare the bed,” Niku said, turning her back to me and preparing the futon. *Yeah, guess I’ll get the underwear, pajamas, and nightcap on. Let’s see... I think the nightcap can just be a hairpin. Although, uh, there goes the ‘cap’ part...*

“Master, everything is ready.”

“Right.”

Niku wagged her tail proudly with the bed made.

“Master. I will hold the ring.”

“Oh, right. Keep a close eye on it.”

Whew, that was close. If Kosaki were with me she might have ended up as a god with me, locking me into being Succuma forever, which would have been a nightmare. Nice catch, Niku. I gave her the Succubus ring.

“And now, we begin!” I declared.

“Yes. Oyasuminasai, Master,” Niku said, bowing her head. Now then, it was finally... finally time. I got into bed, sliding under the covers, and just as I was about to stick my feet in... I suddenly had second thoughts about actually becoming a god.

“Master. Do you need me to give you a shove?”

“...If you don’t mind.”

Thinking about it, the first time I ever left the dungeon’s territory, Niku had given me a push, too. With those memories in mind, I got into the bed with Niku pushing my back.

Into the Divine Realm

“Heya! Welcome, Keima.”

The one to welcome me was the God of Darkness. It was a gray world, neither white like the God of Light’s nor black like the God of Darkness’s. There was also a kotatsu. Why a kotatsu? The God of Light was in it.

“Er, hello, God of Darkness. And... the God of Light?”

The God of Light was silent.

“Oh? God of Light? You seem a bit down. Why not greet Keima?”

The God of Light was shining as always, but they were just slumped onto the kotatsu. They slapped away the God of Light when they came prodding at them, so it didn’t seem to be a fake or a corpse.

“Sorry about that, Keima. The God of Light sure is shy. Anyway, how about going into the kotatsu? There’s oranges,” the God of Darkness said. As he said, the kotatsu had oranges, and teacups with green tea.

“Sooo, God of Light? Keima’s here, you know. How about saying something?”

“Be quiet, God of Darkness. I’m synchronizing right now.”

“Wait, what? Now of all times? Past you sure didn’t think things through.”

“Blah, blah, I can’t hear you, I can’t hear yooou,” the God of Light said, covering his ears and shaking his head. The two of them sure seemed to be good friends.

“What exactly is going on here?” I asked.

“Ah, we used to be humans, you see. We’re synchronizing with our memories from when we were humans. Once it finishes, we’ll speak like we used to, but don’t worry about it too much. It’s all temporary.”

Formerly humans. Well, I was in the process of trying to become a god myself, so they had probably done the same thing themselves at some point.

“So, you used to be humans?”

“Humans you know very well, in fact. Wanna try to guess?”

“Humans I know? Er... Haku’s old master Lyon or whatever?”

“Ah, that’s the wrong direction. I’m thinking less past, more present?”

“Present?”

“Synchronization complete. God of Darkness, stop playing around and cancel the disguise already,” came a suddenly very cute voice. It was the God of Light speaking.

With a pop, the light all disappeared, leaving behind a black-haired girl with brown skin and dog ears. She was wearing a tight-fitting, white ao dai rather than a maid outfit, and her eyes were

golden, but she still looked exceedingly familiar.

“Uh...”

“Alright, guess I’m gonna... Ahem. I suppose I will as well.”

The God of Darkness, less dramatically, took off their mask. Their body blurred, and after a link they had turned into a black-haired, golden-eyed girl with dog ears and brown skin, just like the God of Light. The biggest difference was that she wore a smug, confident grin...

“...Welcome to the seat of the gods. We have been waiting, Keima.”

“Tada! We were the Gods of Light and Darkness all along!”

Before me were unmistakably Niku and Toi.



“...Mm? What? Niku, and Toi? Why?”

“Ahahahaha! Yes, that’s the face I wanted to see! Okay, I’m half-joking. To be clear, we are not the Niku and Toi you know. To put it in simple terms, we are from a different timeline; a different world line,” Toi (the God of Darkness) explained.

“...Er, Niku?”

“Yes, Keima?”

It felt kind of unsettling for Niku to be calling me by my name. Well, it was the God of Light (Niku), but still.

“...Er, so basically, the Gods of Light and Darkness were a Niku and Toi from another world who became gods?”

“That’s right, and no need to be polite. It would amuse me to see you all stiff, but... but... Erm, how did I address you again? Master Keima?”

“You may also speak with me as you usually do. You are not my Master, but you are Keima. Also, you called him Lord Keima or something of the sort, God of Darkness.”

“Ah, yes, that was it. Lord Keima.”

The God of Light is Niku, the God of Darkness is Toi. And Niku’s master is not me.

Yeah, okay, I got it. I see where this is going.

“Let me guess, the twist is that the creator god is me from another world line?”

“Spoiling things ahead of time is no fun, Lord Keima. But yes, that’s correct,” Toi said with a grin.

“So, how exactly did this happen?”

“We do not know the details ourselves, but there were once true Gods of Darkness and Light by the names of Eggar and Ushin, as well as a true creator god by the name of Auty. You stole their existences, Lord Keima, replaced them with us, and began a world anew.”

What the hell was that me doing?

“Keima. Rokuko died. You did it all to revive her.”

“Uh.”

“To think you would kill even gods for Rokuko’s sake, Lord Keima! Now that’s love!” Toi’s shoulder jabbed my side affectionately. I see. Apparently the me of that world killed the gods.

“I believe it was a peaceful, mutually agreed-upon handover of power by the end of it, Keima. I was in awe that you would fool the creator god himself...”

What the hell was that me doing?

“For convenience, let’s call the world with the true creator god the first world. To revive Rokuko, what was needed was a world where she had surpassed the death causality and stayed alive. Ah, but do not

worry. He would just be copying a portion of her fate, so there would not be a hair of influence laid upon the Rokuko of that world.”

“I see.”

And so began the second world.

“But Rokuko died even in this second world, and so the Lord Keima of that world became the creator god again and created the third world.”

“Yes. Then Rokuko died in the third world. The Keima of that world became the creator god, and created the fourth world.”

“And that Rokuko died, too. Thus the Lord Keima of that world became the creator god, and created the fifth world.”

“Uh...?”

Just how much is Rokuko dying? Actually, wait.

“I’m getting a bad feeling about this... What, is this one of those things where an infinite series of thousands upon millions of worlds was tossed aside until finally reaching mine? I’ve read a book like that before, y’know.”

Toi gave a smug grin. “Hah, I’d expect no less of you. You noticed our secret. Indeed, this world is the result of a long, brutal battle which surpassed infinite time itself to—”

“No, Keima. You are from that fifth world, while Toi and I are from the fourth world,” Niku clarified instantly. That was surprisingly fast.

“The creator god, the God of Darkness, and the God of Light. Each is handed over and moved to the next.”

“Hm... But wait, why didn’t that first guy make the second and third world? Why make creator gods like they’re candy?”

“Lord Keima. Making a world is extremely difficult; do you think you would want to make two or three entirely different ones? When there is someone right in front of you whom you can trust to do it in your stead?”

Good point, Toi. I would not.

“And so, unable to directly interfere with the fate of life and death, Keima modified various external parameters, such as whether Rokuko was in teen or loli form when you first met, or speeding up the creation of the church, and so on.”

“As a result, you finally succeeded in saving her from being killed by the fake God of Light, and succeeded in creating the first world where her fated death was overcome. Thus, in the First Keima Lazy Waiting Room, the original Keima and the revived Rokuko are... Erm, in the process of making a little brother or sister for Soto. With Rokuko generally taking the lead.”

She phrased that as cleanly as she could. But well, far be it from me to complain. There were three lazy waiting rooms that had been

made up to this point, and all the mes who had retired from the position of creator god were being as lazy as they wanted in them.

“Hm? Wait, do you mean just the first one? Did the second, third, and fourth worlds have different causes of deaths?”

“Indeed. The third world had the same as the first, but in the second she died from her Core being destroyed. In the fourth, that is, our world, she died following Master to his grave after he passed away from old age,” Niku said. She used “Master” there since that was the me from her world.

Wow... Rokuko died chasing after me, huh...?

“...Mm? But isn’t that kind of a happy end? Why don’t things end there?”

Niku averted her gaze. Toi explained.

“Well, Lord Keima. Reality was not the pretty story the God of Light just told you; in fact, it was Rokuko just choking on a melon roll. Good grief, it was all because she chose to age alongside you... To think she died in the night celebration right before reviving you. When you awoke, you had quite the look on your face. Although all ended well thanks to Soto maintaining the dungeon.”

What the hell was the fourth Rokuko doing? Apparently the fourth me had done things that more than made him befitting of God status without even using the Divine Bedding.

“From there, the third Keima asked him to be the next creator god in return for reviving Rokuko, and he accepted. The fourth world instantly resolved the Haku-being-possessed-by-Core-10 event, after all. Thanks to the Divine Alarm Clock, that is.”

The revival process required one to overcome the cause of death, not evade it entirely. Apparently you needed to cause basically the same situation, then push through it.

“I was rather proud of that alarm clock, you know.”

“Indeed. And that is exactly why it caused problems, God of Darkness.”

Hence in this world they had acted through highly indirect influence to prevent me from remembering the Divine Alarm Clock, on top of giving me a bad impression of it through having it fail against Aidy and get stolen.

“Still, to think we just had to dye Rokufa’s hair blonde. That is Master for you.”

“Indeed. He said, ‘I would move to save her for sure. She can handle the rest,’ after all. His life experience living as Lord Keima until his death certainly came in use here.”

Apparently that was why {Ultra Good Fortune} had suggested dying her hair blonde. Judging by Niku’s phrasing, it had been the suggestion of the fourth world’s me.

“Incidentally, after saving Rokuko, you would have died irrecoverably if you did nothing else... But impressively, you escaped from the fake God of Light’s attack. That was an incredible idea.”

“What, the Sacrifice Escape? It’s an ultimate technique where you escape killing blows by sacrificing yourself first. As you know, I expected to get revived, so yeah.” The technique was commonly seen in card games.

So basically, I heard about the circumstances of the gods. I could start the next world, or I could not. I didn’t need to become the creator god in the first place. There weren’t any dead Rokukos anymore.

“Still, I must be some creator god to just be able to start making a new world whenever I want.”

“I mean, what would a creator god be if they could not even make a world?”

We sipped our tea, and there was a pause.

“Lord Keima. Is there anything else you would like to ask? Given the opportunity, I don’t mind answering any questions you might have.”

“We do have ample time. Feel free, Keima.”

At their prompting, I fell into thought.

“Ehhh, well... I got a purple Dummy Core from the gacha, why was that?”

A long time ago, I got a purple Dummy Core from the gacha, but had left it in {Storage} until Soto came and made it impossible to get.

“That is a Dummy Core terminal filled with Soto’s handover information. Absorbing that will inevitably result in the birth of Soto, the Goddess of Spacetime. This is the most important bit of influence.”

“Handover data? For Soto?”

“Yes. And it includes her fate, so no matter what, she will ripen within your {Storage}. Master called it ‘New Game Plus.’”

It had been purple so I wouldn’t feel like using it, and would just toss it into {Storage} instead. Poisonous colors ward off birds, as they say. Apparently the original idea came from the second me. That’s extremely like me; I know how I think.

“The gacha draws from everything randomly, even other worlds, so it is easy to influence it from the divine realm.”

“Oh, that’s how the gacha works?”

“Yes. The more points you put in, the farther away the worlds you can draw from. You can also draw things from the same world, or things prepared in the divine realm.”

But it just drew things to you; it didn’t make them part of your dungeon. That was why I had been able to ignore Rokuko’s orders at first, why Phenny clawed at me, and why we had been able to give

Igni back to Ittetsu.

“Anything else?”

“Not much comes to mind.”

“Well, we have plenty of time, so just sit and listen. Goodness, to think I, one made by Lady Leona, would one day be the one to make half of her! Brilliant! Ahahahaha!”

“Right, ‘cause Toi is the God of Darkness... But why that way? Why’s Niku the God of Light and you the God of Darkness?”

“These two gods were initially brothers, so there was less of a burden on reality for us sisters to take their place. Furthermore, do you think this crude pup could ever handle something so delicate as creation?”

“The fact I can’t deny that is annoying, so I will punch you later.”

“I’d rather you not. The God of Destruction’s fists hurt as much as you would expect.”

I passed the days chatting with Niku and Toi just like that.

Along the way I learned much pointless trivia, like how the auto-translator was a babel system made by Leona with the language barriers blurred and mixed together, with the translations being half-automatic based on the Hero’s consciousness. Also that she had made the word “Masuda” mean “Master” so as to steal the seat of the Creator God (aka the Master).

“...You seem to have accumulated much divinity, so you may descend now,” Niku said, looking into my eyes. Toi smoothly lent a hammer, and a look revealed that my eyes had turned red, like hot metal. Wowee. Very colorful. Apparently they would turn gold if I kept accumulating power.

“Do put in colored contacts or something of the sort if you wish to hide the color, Lord Keima.”

“Hold on, do I not need to do anything else? Like some kind of ritual?”

“...Keima. You spent two weeks in the same kotatsu as us two supreme gods, listening to all the secrets of the world. I believe that is more than enough to become a demigod.”

Good point. In a certain TRPG, my SAN meter would have shot so far down it would’ve broken forever.

“Oh, and I forgot to mention, but you will be an [Apprentice Creator God] for now, Lord Keima. Logical, given all you’ve learned, no?”

“It should be easier for you to use creation-type magic now, Keima.”

I figured I would be the Beddhist god or the God of Sleep or something like that, but apparently not. The Divine Bedding had been

made for the creator god to begin with. It made sense for me to be an apprentice creator god when I was the creator god in other world lines.

“Also, Keima. Could you punch your version of me with a fully clenched fist for me?”

“...Hm? I mean, not if she hasn’t done anything wrong.”

“She has now, so do not hold back. To be specific, she interpreted your ‘give me a shove’ as broadly as possible to use the Succubus ring to charm you. It took several seconds for you to recover due to having let your guard down, and in that gap she slid under the covers with you. Oh, and she slipped the ring off and placed it beside the bed.”

What the hell are you doing, Niku?

“So that is what you did, God of Light? That explains why you were synchronizing at this timing.”

“...It seems the me of this world could not endure it when told she could not serve as his dakimakura for two weeks. Aaah, how shameful... I am embarrassed as can be.”

As a result, she had slipped into the Divine Bedding with me, and had become a demigod through the energy reverberating off me. Apparently she would become my subordinate god as a result. The problem had been that she also had a Philosopher’s Stone made by the God of Chaos. To think one was just stuck in a pendant we bought in Tsia...

“So, Keima. From this point forward, we will return to being the God of Light and God of Darkness. Our speech will as well, and I recommend you do not mention our true forms.”

“It will be annoying in various ways if you do not. There is no benefit in doing so, regardless.”

Toi put on her mask, and Niku began to shine.

“Well, go ahead and mail me whenever you want. I’m your father, after all.”

“Nnn, ahem. You can mail me when you like as well, Keima.”

And so, I was returned from the Divine Realm, and woke up in bed.

Niku was in exactly the position the God of Light had described, so I first ground my fist against her head.

And so, we both became gods through collecting the divine instruments. What next?

Well, go back to sleep, I guess. Plenty of time.

“Keima, you know a lot of work built up while you were asleep, right?” Rokuko asked.

“Uh.”

Seems like there’s plenty of time for work, too. Good grief.

“You do know I’m technically a god now, right?”

“God or not, you’re still town chief, and if anything, won’t the Pope of Beddhism becoming a god make you busier than ever? There are people flooding the town with questions about Succuma, so it’s good you became a god sooner rather than later. Who knows when else you’d have enough time to sleep for so long?” Rokuko said with a smile.

Wait, is that why you told me to hurry up and become a god? Man... It looks like I’m gonna be busy for a while. I guess I can think about the future once things settle down a bit.

Ending

The Four Braves and Chloe's Perspective

Within a meeting room of the Ivory Villa, Chloe and the empire's Four Braves were gathered.

"We have discovered a weak point in the fact that if our lady is controlled, we cannot resist her. I would like to reflect on our failures here and form a plan for the next such incident," Chloe began, taking the role of meeting leader.

"Indeed. The danger in question has parted, but this is still urgent business. That said... did you not have higher brainwashing resistance than Chloe, Dolce? Why were you manipulated so easily?"

"You know why... He was an undead Core, and I'm a Wraith... It was a matter of affinity; there was nothing that could be done..."

"Indeed. If we had been facing Leona here, our positions would perhaps have been reversed," Chloe said, nodding in agreement with Dolce's self-defense.

"Me next, me neeext. Keima handled everything this time, so how about we just ask Keima the next time something happens?" Misha asked, rolling around casually as the only one to have evaded Core 10's control.

"Misha, enough joking. We need to be able to handle this ourselves. Why did you not stop us immediately in the first place, Misha?"

"No, no, Sally. Haku has Misha by her side in anticipation of events such as this when she cannot ask others for help herself. She is not entirely wrong here."

"Nyahaha! My decision was purrfect. Though I was surprised as anyone to see the [Ivory Labyrinth] completely conquered."

"Indeed, and as a result it must be completely renovated. Aaah, my head hurts," sighed Chloe. "All that said, a plan once used becomes a plan easier to counter. We thus need to think of a new one regardless."

"Oh, I might have an idea, then," Amelia said, waving her snake tail in lieu of lifting her hand. "On the day of the attack on the villa, Sally completely abandoned her orders and left the area. To meet her boyfriend."

"What?! That doesn't have anything to do with this, Amelia!" Sally shouted, standing up with a clatter.

But Amelia shook her head with a serious expression. "I'm very serious here, Sally. What I mean to say is... love might have the power to overcome the bondage of a Dungeon Core!" Amelia declared, slamming a fist on the table.

"Love?! W-Well, when you put it like that, now I feel embarrassed... My love for Pamela? Ahaha, I like it."

"I see. Love... Even in stories, love often breaks brainwashing... I didn't think of that, since Wraiths have nothing to do with biological reproduction..."

"Hm. Now that you mention it, you could say that I resisted Core 10's control due to my love for Lady Haku. This seems like a valuable tool."

Everyone collectively nodded.

"Which means, we must find partners to love... Meaning, marriage hunting?"

"Well... Everyone found out through the broadcast that I'm a Lamia. Do you think I will still be able to find a man? My whole lower half is that of a snake."

"I mean, I'm a Wraith... I wonder if anyone would be okay with dying for me... Probably not..." lamented Dolce.

"The public story is that Core 10's curse turned us into monsters, you know. Regardless, some will be turned on by snake halves and ghosts and such. Not that we need to limit ourselves to humans," Chloe said.

Fixing the problem was urgent, but love was not something one could rush.

"Oh, but I'm fine, since I have Pamela!" Sally declared, puffing out her chest proudly. Sally's identity as a monster hadn't been leaked since she just looked like a full set of armor, and even if she broke up with Pamela another lover would be provided to her in secret. It was genuinely envy-inducing that she didn't have to think about anything.

"Good grief, everyone's being so romantic. Not that this has anything to do with me," Misha said, purring and pawing at the ceiling.

"Maybe we could just have Lady Haku drink a Futanaaru potion and make kids with all of us?"

"Oho... I've heard stories of people raising their children to their preference..."

"In that case, my son with Pamela could be Dolce's husband!"

"Dolce, Sally. I believe Amelia wanted to say 'motherhood is love as well,' not that we should groom our children."

The meeting went off track from there, and in the end it was settled everyone would just work on their own solutions.

Aidy's Perspective

"Oh, how wonderful and fun that was..." Aidy sighed.

"My lady. Could you stop daydreaming and return to reality soon?" Sebas said, mercilessly.

"Do allow me to continue soaking in the bliss. Although I may be a Dungeon Core, dancing with the [Ivory Labyrinth] was surely a once in a lifetime opportunity."

"So you say, but in only a year of this daydreaming, you will weaken into unforeseen levels."

"Jeez, you are oh so pushy, Sebas," said Aidy, then instantly hardened her expression. Though he could predict that once again, she would be daydreaming with a goofy expression. "The thought of being able to fight with such monsters as much as I want once I obtain enough DP is... very motivating."

"Yes. Let us continue our training, so we might be ready for that day."

"Quite. I would like to fight with a fake God of Light myself. Perhaps Father will make one for me if I ask at the next meeting."

Sebas gave an exasperated expression at that, which meant a lot.

"Incidentally, Sebas. Have you any interest in immortality?"

"Immortality? That would be needing to serve you beyond even a single lifetime. I could think of no worse hell."

"You may retire from being a butler once you have trained a successor well enough."

"Ah, then I am somewhat interested."

Aidy smiled at her ever-honest butler.

"Then I would have you know there seems to be a set of equipment known as the Divine Equipment."

"Ah, and like the Divine Bedding, if you find them all you become a god?"

"Perhaps. Shall we look for them? I have locations for three of them already," Aidy said, curving her lips up into a grin. Each had their own owner, and they were all deadly opponents indeed. Naturally, they would be fighting each of them and stealing them, as was the Demon Realm way.

"This does seem more entertaining than the Great Demon King's training."

"Then it's settled. Let us be off."

"Yes, my lady. I will prepare the baby Sleipnir you were paid with."

And so, Aidy and Sebas began their own journey for godhood.

The Great Demon King's Perspective

The Great Demon King was visiting a somewhat-open space in a certain forest off the beaten path. There stood a broken spear stuck into the ground, marking a grave.

“Core 66. I have avenged you,” the Great Demon King said, pouring a bottle of alcohol he had brought onto the spear. It was a clear, distilled liquid that dripped down its shaft and soaked the ground.

“Ah, what a waste of good alcohol.”

“Hrm. Leona.”

He could tell without even turning around. This area had a barrier, and could only be entered through special means. The only three to know those means were the Great Demon King, Haku, and Leona.

“You know that Rom isn’t there, right? They were a Dungeon Core.”

“Yes. This is just sentimentality. No need to point it out,” the Great Demon King said, finishing pouring out the entire bottle before turning around. “And? Your business here? I expect you are not here to visit the grave.”

“Hmph, look at you, acting all old-man-like. You were so cute back then, too. I believe I was seventeen at the time—”

“If you have business, state it,” the Great Demon King said, scoffing to show his displeasure.

“Well. Things are awkward with Haku now... Mind if I sleep over?”

“Have they not always been? You split apart permanently after defiling Lyon’s grave, as I recall. Necessary to save her or not, even after all this time I can only balk at the sheer sacrilege of it,” the Great Demon King said with exasperation. She had fused Lyon’s body with her own to read his memories, then modified a portion of Haku’s memories based on that. The Great Demon King didn’t know the details of the modification, but naturally she had been furious.

“Well?”

“I-I mean, it’s Haku’s fault for being such a cute tsundere!”

“What, you made up already? Very well then,” the Demon King said, smirking. “I will lend you the right hand. It should still have Angel blood. You will be pleased, I expect? The [Giant Demon King Statue] was your design, after all.”

“Oh my, a pure red room; how passionate. Though it’s probably brown now after all this time. I’ll alchemize it into potions or something to clean up for you,” Leona said with a smile.

“Incidentally, if my grandkids chase after me, could you tell them you don’t know where I am?”

“The pups serving that boy...?”

“No, other ones. Well, I doubt you would give them an audience yourself, but still...”

She had some complex circumstances, it seemed.

“Explain yourself. I will treat you to dinner.”

“I’ll have standing udon, then. To be honest, that’s why I’m here in the first place.”

“...Fine, but I will be going in disguise. I have a reputation to maintain.”

“Awww, what? Wouldn’t it be funny for the Great Demon King to stand in front of an udon shop and eat on his feet?”

The Great Demon King left the forest with Leona, considering now a good time to deepen old bonds.

Emmymephy’s Perspective

“I say, has another weird fortune been told?”

“As astute as ever, Princess.” The messenger from the imperial fortune-telling division bowed his head.

“You know I just completed the baffling fortune, ‘After enjoying a live show, you would do well to give your freshly removed socks to the girl watching next to you,’ yes?”

“Yes. We were grateful that fortune was actually clear.”

The actual fortune had used stiff phrasing such as, ‘at the cacophony of fruit,’ but the fortune-telling division had Ichigo fans that immediately identified it as a live show: “Ah, this is like a live show.”

“Yep. The Sticks of Light are the glowsticks. Waving them refers to the front row.”

“Soft feet cloth... Socks, huh?”

And so, Emmymephy ended up having to commit the bizarre action of watching a live show, then stripping her socks and giving them to the girl next to her.

“I say, such a simple act saving 500 lives is more than welcome...” But at the same time, upon learning that the girl beside her was none other than an associate of hers (Soto), Emmymephy had felt terribly embarrassed. Once she actually took off her socks and offered them, despite her embarrassment, Soto did accept them, but... the socks were unclean garbage, having been stained with sweat and oil. Hopefully she threw them away immediately.

“Still, I say, why would handing over socks save the lives of five hundred adventurers?”

“Who can say? Only the gods know.”

What exactly were those higher beings thinking?

“On second thought, wasn’t the ancestor already imprisoned by

that time? Perhaps some weird influence infected it.”

“Unlikely. The fortunes are granted by the God of Spacetime, not the Ivory Goddess. Surely, this one was also meant to save the Ivory Goddess.”

On second thought, indeed, the Ivory Goddess was the Goddess of Adventurers, which was completely different. Thus, Emmymephy understood: the God of Spacetime was a pervert. They had to be to make a fortune like that.

“So, what is the fortune this time?”

“Right. This time—”

The messenger conveyed the details to Emmymephy. She put a hand on her forehead and faced the ground.

“...Aah, another bizarre fortune. I say, the gods must be laughing at me.”

“Will you not do this one, then? It is a small-scale one this time, with only ten lives on the line. The target is a fairly irrelevant figure, a researcher working on a giant boobification potion, and so I believe ignoring this would have little impact on—”

“I say, of course I will do it!”

Even if she was just a toy to the gods, if following their directives saved even a single life, Emmymephy had no choice to do so. She was not... entirely uninterested in the potion described, but she would have done the fortune regardless. She was that kind of classy, respectable imperial daughter.

Incidentally, the question of whether Soto would have lost control of herself without Emmymephy’s socks and charged Succuma’s feet for her socks instead—thereby rendering the gates temporarily unusable—is a mystery that truly only the Goddess of Spacetime knew the answer to.

The Holy Kingdom’s Perspective

Within the magnificent, white central temple of the Holy Kingdom’s city, Mastermind, was an office for the pope, and within it Narikin was working hard on his duties. His servant Toi opened a letter, and conveyed the details to him.

“My lord, another request for a revival. What shall I do with it?”

“I obviously can’t actually revive the dead.”

“Indeeeed. I shall come up with a reason to refuse.”

Reviving Keima had resulted in a significant uptick in requests for resurrections. However, Narikin did not actually have the power to revive anyone, so even saying “I will pay any amount” would not change anything.

“I never thought being the pope would be so difficult,” Narikin

said.

“If only they would hold the next pope election soon, eh?”

“Exactly. I have finished the work Master left me with, so I would like to resign from my post and tour other countries, or rather, go on a trip to investigate them.”

He shared that dream with Rokufa, who was facing paperwork as his secretary.

“Toi, when exactly do you think the next pope election will be? I thought I was only an emergency, temporary pope,” Narikin continued.

“Not any time soon.”

“I see. Not within this year, then? The sooner I can quit, the better.”

“Far from this year. You will be lucky if it happens in the next decade. Even if there were an election, there would be no one competing and thus it would automatically end with you being reinstated, meaning you will not be able to quit being a pope for the next twenty years, I expect?”

That was a bombshell.

“But why?!”

“Your holiness, have you forgotten exactly what you did?”

First of all, Narikin was backed by Magni the archscholar. Then there was the current High Priestess Alca. There were also all the circumstances leading up to him becoming pope, but even excluding that, he had sent Alca the High Priestess to the [Ivory Labyrinth]. And on top of that, she had temporarily sealed the dungeon, providing essential aid that allowed them to reach the bottom floor in the first place.

In other terms: Narikin was a legend that had driven the oldest dungeon in the world, protected by a massive empire and religion, to one step away from death.

It would be hard to tell people in the Holy Kingdom *not* to support him. On top of that, Alca’s conquest had been broadcast throughout the Holy Kingdom, meaning her popularity was at its peak as well. She, herself, would allow none other than Narikin to be the pope.

The final kicker was that he had allegedly gone to the bottom of the [Ivory Labyrinth], Floor 189, and revived an adventurer in such a way that the empire and the goddess Succuma owed him enormously. His connections were so great that ten, twenty years were not enough; people would inevitably call for him to become the eternal pope. There had been letters demanding just that, though Toi continued to rebuff them.

“Hold on a second. If I become that eternal pope or whatever, could I not unload all this work onto the new pope?”

“That would lead to my lady becoming the new pope instead. The God of Light’s servant, Rokufa the Angel; a natural fit for a pope. The people will rejoice, and her support base will be infinite. As an Angel, I believe she may serve for around a hundred years for so.”

“Narikin, I propose no to that.”

“Hrm.”

It seemed both members of the couple had too high a support base.

“Do Alca the High Priestess and old lady Magni not have enough? Er, the support base, I mean? Alca the High Priestess started it all, no?”

“Is it not about time for you to give up? What’s impossible is impossible,” Toi said, at this point finding it too tedious to even explain.

There was a pause.

“...Hugo, could you be the pope?”

“Too bad, Narikin. Mama only ordered me to be your bodyguard. If you stop being the pope, I’ll just leave and go back to her.”

“Ngh...”

Hugo, who had been silently guarding him, cut him off without a sound. Though his logic was predictable.

“...Ah! I’ve got it! I can start protecting dungeons! It’s genius!” Narikin declared.

“Oh? Protecting dungeons?”

“Exactly. Destroying dungeons is the reason the Holy Kingdom exists. Thus, if I do the opposite, I will undoubtedly draw the ire of the people and be forced down from my post as pope!”

“I see. You do have a point.”

“Indeed I do, I certainly do. Now then, let us begin planning!” Narikin said, getting cocky due to Toi showing some agreement.

Under normal circumstances, a plan to protect dungeons would have sent endless seething Narikin’s way. But for some reason, Toi got the feeling this plan would not go well. She did not rationally understand why, but she had the feeling everyone would interpret it optimistically. A strong feeling.

That very moment, Alca the High Priestess came.

“Oh, Alca! Perfect timing! Think over this plan with me.”

“Hm? Ah, a plan to preserve dungeons?” Upon hearing of this plan, the saint who should have been the representative for all those in the Holy Kingdom who wanted to smash all dungeons... smiled. “That sounds ideal. After all, if you were to put your all into Your Holiness, all the dungeons in the world would be eradicated in an instant. Ahaha.”

“...Er? Let’s do it, then?”

Ah, that was why. Toi instantly was assured that Narikin's plan would end in failure.

Incidentally, in the future this plan would prevent a gap in production rate from forming between the Holy Kingdom and the dungeon-utilizing empire and Demon Realm, and calm their hatred of dungeons just enough for them to be barely forgiven by the empire, leading to the Holy Kingdom prospering for generations to come, but... Narikin did not know of this at the time.

Eventually, Keima said to him: "What, you can't quit no matter what you do? I mean, nothing will hurt your reputation more than dropping your job cold turkey and going on a trip, so just go wild." Narikin took that advice, and would later be known as the Wandering Pope of Justice, a common figure in tales of a hero traveling the world to punish evil.

[The Flame Caverns'] Perspective

Within Ittetsu and Redra's dungeon, the [Flame Caverns] of Mount Tsia, a small birdlike Wyvern came flying. It was a messenger. This was the proper means by which the Dragon King faction communicated with each other.

"Hey! Word from the Dragon King faction! Seems like they wanna have a Dungeon Battle with you, Ittetsu!" called Redra.

"Say fuckin' what? Are they complaining 'cause I lent my neighbor a fuckin' hand?"

If so, Ittetsu would have to say that the Dragon King had become a shadow of his former self. However, if this were just a punishment, the king would have sent the Dungeon Battle challenge without a single advance word of warning. Sending notice through a Wyvern meant something else was up.

"Nah, they say they just want to use the gate for transport!"

"What, is everyone thinking like fuckin' Keima now...?"

Redra had heard from Aidy that Dungeon Battles were used for transport in the Demon Realm all the time. Apparently the Demon King wanted to use the same method to get to Mount Tsia.

"What's the point with comin' over here? Well, whatever. Guess we'll just get ready to welcome the Dragon King. Redra, get some fuckin' drinks or something."

"You can count on me! Magma works, right? 'Cause he's a Dragon."

"Eh, probably," Ittetsu said, seeing Redra off, then challenging Core 5 to a Dungeon Battle. It was accepted immediately, and he opened a gate on Floor 25. A black Dragon, Core 5 the Dragon King, came through.

“Aaah, Core 112! Been a while since the last gathering. How’ve you been?”

“Good, good, Core 5. Got something important going on?”

“Indeed. I have been training Core 650, 651, and 652 ever since Father instructed me to, and... Er, is it just me, or is this room a bit too hot?”

“Y’think so? More likely that your place is cold, Core 5.”

The [Flame Caverns], especially its core, were hot enough that one’s boots would melt just from standing on the floor. It was less hot and more boiling. Though a Dragon would be fine in it.

“Well, regardless. I was thinking you could train them a bit over the next two or three days! You lot, come out!”

“Y-Yes sir, Core 5 sir! Ah... AAAAGH?!”

“Nghuh, we gotta get outta here! Tchaaaah!”

“Thank yo—AGGH, SO HOT!”

The human-sized snake, giant frog, and giant slug all came through the portal, but then instantly fled back out. Or rather, they stuck their heads out then instantly back in.

“Hrm... Was it too early for them?”

“Is it really that hot?”

“Our bodies are just built for this, Core 5! Core 112!”

“I’d want at least boots... Also I’ll dry out...”

“We’d need to learn humanification or dragonification first...”

Thinking about it, snakes had to move by dragging their bodies along the hot ground, while frogs would get dried out from the air. Both applied to slugs, and really, going inside the [Flame Caverns] would be essentially suicide.

“Tch, fine. My apologies, Core 112. I thought about lending them to you for training, but it was too early.”

“What, Core 5, you came here just for that?” Ittetsu asked, blinking.

Core 5 slapped his hands. “Ah! Yes, I did forget something. Your accomplishments the other day reached even the [Dragon Valley].”

“Aaah. Were ya watching?”

“Indeed. To think a goddess as adorable and wonderful as Succuma exited out in the wind.”

Surprisingly, even the holy land of Dragons, the [Dragon Valley], had monitors appear. Speaking of which, he felt like a high amount of Dragonutes had participated.

“That Keima, just how far does his hand fuckin’ reach...?”

The [Dragon Valley] was even farther south than Daide. Reaching that far showed a terrifying reach.

“So, upon seeing those images, I thought of using gates like this to aid in training. I also thought of rewarding you for participating in the

public execution of that traitor. The execution failed in the end, but having the internals of her dungeon exposed publicly must have been humiliating. She will be stewing for some time.”

Ah, was that how it looked from the outside? Ittetsu nodded to himself.

“But I dunno what reward I’d want.”

“There’s a horde of brats trying to propose to Igni. I will smash them to bits for you.”

“Now that’s good. Thank ye, thank ye.”

Especially since Igni was head over heels for Wataru the Hero, and would refuse all of them anyway. Though who knew how things would be two hundred years from now.

That was when Redra came out with a huge tub of magma for some light drinking.

“Ittetsu, I brought the driinks... Wait, what? Goban?”

“Geh, Redra?! I thought I saw you on the monitor, but it’s really you?” Core 5 gave an awkward look after seeing Core 112’s wife Redra.

“Hm? What, Redra, you know the Dragon King?”

“Hah! So you’re the Dragon King now, huh? You sure’ve made your way up in the world!”

“We kind of knew each other in the [Dragon Valley]. What, you didn’t know? It’s been hundreds of years.”

“My bad! I don’t care about any man but my husband!”

Apparently his wife and boss were childhood friends. That was news to Ittetsu.

“Hey, didja know, Ittetsu? This guy confessed to me once! So, have you gotten manly enough to drink magma yet, Goban? Or do you still have that human tongue?”

“You! Don’t say that! I’m the Dragon King now! I’ve gotta maintain my reputation! And I told you, magma’s hard if you’re not a fire elemental! Anyone’s tongue would burn!”

As for the confession, well, considering she was married to Ittetsu now, you could guess how it went. Redra’s taste was hot men (literally).

“Ittetsu, just tell me if this guy ever bothers you! I’ll mess him up for ya!”

“...Er, well, alright?”

“Core 112, I’m impressed you ended up marrying this girl... I mean, she’s a beauty for sure, and she’s strong, and yeah, plenty of mana, too. Everything’s perfect—except her personality...”

“Huh? Goban, wanna get punched?”

“Core 5, Redra’s personality is perfect too, y’know.”

“Agree to disagree... But in any case, my apologies for this.

Forgive me,” Core 5 lost to the pressure of his childhood friend and her partner, ultimately giving up and apologizing. It was a rare instance of the Dragon King apologizing.

From there, they got hyped up talking about old times.

“Uh, Core 5? What should we be doing?”

“Croak... So hot, I’m drying out... Water...”

“Can we go home noooow?”

Meanwhile, on the other side of the gate in Core 5’s dungeon, the three 600-lot Cores were all slumped over with exhaustion.

Mikan’s Perspective

“...Mm.”

“I dunno about this one...”

“What should we do, Mikan? Rinnew?”

“Ah, Ichigo.”

Backstage, where only employees were allowed, Ichigo found Mikan and Rinnew worrying about something. They were looking at Suzuki, who had turned into an orichalcum statue. They had put him into a small jail, and he looked entirely like an imprisoned Hero, or a local thug.

“What is this thing? It’s kind of gross, even if it is a pretty color.”

“Ah, inside is the real Suzuki the Hero,” explained Rinnew.

“Eep?!” Ichigo jumped back fearfully.

“Umm, what’s going on? Is he alive in there?”

“It’s our payment from Keima. He said it’ll give us DP.”

Indeed, since Suzuki’s {Ultra Healing} had been boosted to its limit, and he was in jail, the DP income was rather extreme. His berserk state was being maintained by the {Ultra Healing}, and not even the God of Chaos could heal him. Nobody really felt the need to heal him, so he ended up being handed to Mikan as a DP source. The problem was... the way it looked.

“It’s useful, but just look at it. I feel like it’ll bring bad luck, and it looks so valuable it could get stolen if we put it in the wrong spot anyway. For now we’ll leave it here in the staff area, but... We need to make some kind of room to hide it,” Rinnew said. She was bad at making hidden rooms and wanted to avoid that, but there didn’t seem to be any other way.

“I have finished my cleaning, Mikan... Hrm? What’s that you have there?” Core 564 asked, popping his head in, too.

“Oh, Mr. Core 564,” Ichigo said. “Erm... It’s Suzuki the Hero, apparently?”

“Oho, a Hero statue. And made of orichalcum, too; very fancy.”

Core 564 thrust his hand through the bars and touched the Suzuki

statue all over.

“It’s like it’s alive! And this jail-shaped case is wonderful as well! It’s exactly like the real Suzuki the Hero is imprisoned within! Mikan, I would like this for myself.”

“Huh? Er, but Mr. Core 564, this is—”

“Sure, Core 564! Mikan can have it, right?!” Rinnew shouted, covering Ichigo’s mouth with her hand and granting permission.

“Hm? ...Oh, sure! Just don’t take it outside the dungeon, and place it in a room the normal people won’t see!”

“Oooh, you have my gratitude, Rinnew, Mikan! At last I have the perfect decoration to adorn my heretofore-empty chambers! Tonight I shall celebrate with a cup of carrot tea!” Core 564 declared, lifting up the cage and Suzuki with it. “Ahahaha, it is as if I can hear shouts of rage! Lalalala.”

That was his aesthetic, it seemed, as one would expect from a demon-type Core. In any case, it was settled that Suzuki would adorn the interior of Core 564’s room without his knowing its secret.

“...Alright. That saved me from making one room.”

“Erm... Is this really okay?” Ichigo asked.

“Core 564 wanted it, so yeah!”

“We can also trust it’ll be safe since he doesn’t know what it really is.”

It was jailed, and he was covered in orichalcum, so the chances of Suzuki breaking out were nil. Even if he did give out actual roars of hate, Core 564 would probably enjoy them as BGM.

“More importantly, seems like Ichigo’s shows are getting a lot more visitors.”

During the broadcast of the conquest of the [Ivory Labyrinth], Ichigo had filled in space between cuts with broadcasted live shows. Thus, people understood Ichigo as a shrine maiden of Succuma, and made lots of noise at every single concert of hers now. The wotagei at the front row was so busy, people were stuffed in and compacted.

“About that. I’m thinking it’s about time to make a concert hall... A whole building for the shows. Keima’s designing it for us, and I wanna use Suzuki’s DP to make a big one!”

“What?! A concert hall?!” Ichigo exclaimed.

Succuma had broadcast with a monitor, so they could even start broadcasting Ichigo themselves with monitors if they said Succuma was letting them do it.

“A concert hall, huh? That reminds me, the imperial theater sure is sending a lot of offers for Ichigo to go play there,” Rinnew commented. A wave of dizziness hit Ichigo; she was just one little monster, but it felt like she had turned into something much bigger.

“Must be rough for you to do all this alone, Ichigo! I’m thinking

about maybe making new ideals too. I could add four War Rabbits, and have an idol group with you as their leader, Ichigo!”

“Oh, not bad. More people will lessen the burden on everyone.”

“What? B-But, me...? A, I-leader?” Ichigo’s hard pounded at the thought of having so much responsibility.

“It’s like being the leader of an adventurer party. I’m counting on you, Ichigo!”

“Let’s aim for ten thousand regular visitors!” squeaked Mikan.

“Fweeeeh... T-Ten thousand is too much!” Ichigo sobbed, but once the live show began she would do her job with aplomb. Not to mention... A lot more than just ten thousand people had watched her sing on the broadcast. A *lot* more.

Tsia’s Perspective

Within Archduke Tsia’s estate, and Maiodore’s home, there was a dinner table. Surrounding it was Maiodore, Bonodore, and their family. The table was covered with white bread and soup made with the Tsia’s duchy’s own world-famous vegetables. The quality of flavor had even increased.

“Speaking of which, Mai. Keima returned the Divine Pillow the other day, but putting that aside, how fares your relationship with Kuroinu?” Archduke Bonodore asked. The engagement had been made with Keima intending to get the Divine Pillow to begin with, and he was curious to know if his acquiring it had changed anything.

Maiodore answered with a smile. “Why, nothing has changed at all. If things continue as we are, it is inevitable we will be married!” she declared; the happy flapping of her wings showed that to be true. Given that their relationship had not changed even after the Ivory Goddess had given him permission to borrow the Divine Pillow with or without their agreement, Bonodore could trust that indeed there would be no obstacles to the marriage.

Furthermore, as Niku Kuroinu had asked things like, “Will we be a couple like Master and Rokuko?” it was clear that Kuroinu did not think poorly of Maiodore either. Incidentally, Maiodore instantly replied, “Of course we will!”

“Dear. This is Mai’s wedding ceremony, but it will be Beddhist style, yes? Perhaps you should look into what we will need now rather than later?”

“Good point, Waltz. Keima is not a fan of tedious work. Things will go much more smoothly if I check with the nuns for what we need and prepare ahead of time. For now, we know we will need a ring. I believe Keima and Rokuko introduced that trend?”

“Oh my, dear. If we make a ring now it will hardly fit for long.”

The archducal couple smiled at one another. If one traced it even further back, they would find it was a trend other Heroes had introduced, but that was that.

“Still, to think Keima would achieve such great accomplishments. It is a source of great pride for me to have such a firm bond with him.”

“Indeed. It was correct to have Mai marry into his family. Especially when she is so enthusiastic about it herself.”

Incidentally, while the great accomplishment did involve the [Ivory Labyrinth] conquest, it was not the fact he had participated in conquering the final floor. That had been hidden in the editing. What, then, was the accomplishment...?

“Beddhism created a bridge between Succuma and the modern world. No doubt Keima as their pope will be spoken of as a legend for centuries to come.”

“Quite. After all, Succuma herself repeated often that the broadcast was provided by the Beddhist church!”

Indeed. It was about the Beddhist support.

To nobles, having supported something was the same as having participated in it yourself. That was exactly why they actively provided support for guild quests and Dragon hunts. A literal god had recognized the Beddhist church’s support and introduced them directly. It was the peak of accomplishment.

“Mai, that red, flame-engulfed Dragon was obeying Keima, no? After all, he is a Dragon Tamer!”

“Indeed, my dear brother Basil. And on top of that, there was another Dragon, and a great spirit Salamander as well. No doubt Keima provided *support* for all of them as well!”

Their second son Basil and Mai chattered excitedly together.

“Father. That Masked Adventurer used moves I saw Kuroinu use in matches prior. I believe there is no mistaking that they were a warrior of Beddhism.”

“Oho! Nice eye, Rondo my boy. You noticed even such a small detail?”

“Of course. But still... Once you retire, Father, I will be the one who has to negotiate with Keima, won’t I? I fear for the future...”

“Ahaha, Keima is a good man, so as long as you interact with him honestly there’s no need to be so uptight. Furthermore, my health has been invigorated ever since I joined the Beddhist church. I’ll be alive and kicking for at least two more decades.”

“That is a bit long, but relieving as well.”

“Once I am wed to Lady Kuro, she will surely accommodate us in various ways. And... even if that does not happen, we are friends, so it should still... No, we WILL get married! No matter what!”

And so Maiodore's table was busy with conversation about Keima.

Uzou and Muzou's Perspective

After participating in the Boss Room battle on Floor 180 of the [Ivory Labyrinth], Uzou and Muzou safely used the gate to return to Tsia. From there, they could finally return to Goren. They immediately went to visit the inn, but Keima was asleep and they couldn't see him. He would be informed of their visit upon waking up.

"Seems like our timing was bad today, Uzou."

"Well, we'll get to meet him before long, Muzou."

And so, they rented a room, and then went back to a spot in the town that had caught their attention.

"They've got whole sweets stands now, huh? Pretty impressive."

"These golem beets are pretty good, Muzou."

They could drink and eat sweets at the stand. It was a real shock that the town had grown enough to just have stands. And stands for sweets, too. Apparently the town was making sugar. Crops near dungeons famously grew strong and healthy, so maybe Goren would be a farming town just like Tsia.

They popped their heads in at the Adventurer's Guild. It had become quite the fine building. This was a long time ago, but back when they explored the [Ordinary Cave] after its paradigm shift, the guild had just been an ordinary tent.

"Heya, Cilia! It's me, Muzou!"

"Been a ton of years! It's me, Uzou!"

"Oh, Uzou, Muzou. It's been a long time; welcome back to Goren," smiled the receptionist. She was technically in charge of this branch office of the Adventurer's Guild, but she often served as a receptionist as well. The population had increased again, and she was thinking of requesting more personnel from the Tsia office.

After dropping by the guild, Uzou and Muzou went to the church next.

"The inn's gotten bigger, and there's even a church now, Uzou."

"It's Her Holiness Succuma's church, y'know? We'll get divine retribution if we don't pray there, Muzou."

However, there was a massive throng of people who wanted to offer their gratitude to Succuma and join the Beddhist church already there, and a bunch of exceedingly beautiful nuns were busily dealing with them.

"Guess we should come back tomorrow."

"Yeah. Keima did say the Beddhist church is all about taking it easy. Dropping by a day late should be fine."

They gave up on the church. Stopping by the inn and getting a

room first had been the right call; they might not have had a room free otherwise.

The bar had really turned into something as well. Once inside, familiar faces came to greet them. A dwarf male and a female human duo. Gozou and Roppe.

“Hey, if it ain’t Uzou and Muzou! Ye gods, man! How many years has it been?”

“You two are still alive, huh?”

“Oh, Gozou! And ol’ Miss Roppe! It’s been a while! Hasn’t it been, Uzou?”

“Yeah, Muzou. Never thought we’d get to see these two again...!”

They celebrated their reunion, and sat down together. At the table was one other: Wataru the Hero, drinking ale and eating fried food.

“Oh? We met in the Demon Realm before. Erm, your names were —”

“Lord Wataru?! You remember us?! It’s been a while, I’m Muzou!”

“I’m so moved. Oh, your work in the [Ivory Labyrinth] was incredible. I’m Uzou!”

They had met in the Demon Realm before. Their reunion was touching.

“What, ye lot know each other? Eh, let’s drink then. I’ll treat ye both, so let’s hear what’s been going on with ya.”

“Are you treating me, too, Gozou?”

“Pay for yourself, Wataru. You paid off your debt, right?”

“Yeah, but I need to earn money for the inn, and to pay for dates with Neruneh.”

Although he had paid off his debt, that had led to his staying in the grand suite, which as expected cost money. Though, well, the food and service were both as good as it gets.

And so, they drank until night, sharing tales of adventure and celebrating their reunion. It was a great time.

“Alright! I’ll guide you through the dungeon tomorrow, Uzou, Muzou!”

“Thanks for the help, Gozou.”

“Though we were the first to explore the dungeon, y’know, Gozou.”

“It’s changed a lot since you two were here, so you’re gonna feel real dumb soon. Am I right, Wataru?” Roppe asked.

“Ahaha, I’ll come, too. The farther down you go the more fun it gets!”

The drinking was so fun they drank too much, so the Uzou Muzou siblings ended up having to use potions to cure their hangovers before going to the dungeon.

Dragg's Perspective

The town of Dragg rested behind the other end of a tunnel by Goren. There rested a group of criminals slash Succuma fanatics who demanded to have their forced labor sentences extended.

“Extend our punishment! We haven’t come close to atoning for our crimes!”

“We, the united criminals, absolutely refuse to allow our sentences to be reduced!”

“Let us dedicate our lives to Mama, you scuuum!”

The protests were bizarre. Furthermore, since they were using these protests as chants while doing their mining works, nobody could really tell them to stop, and it wasn’t as if they were not doing work. Like... Wasn’t it normal for prisoners to WANT their sentence to be reduced?

Cid Pavella, town chief of Dragg and son of Pavella’s archduke, had no idea what was wrong with these people. But since they weren’t causing any problems, it would be a legal issue to extend their sentence as they demanded. However, when he told them to just cause problems so he could have an excuse, they said that would go against their apology to mama, so no. Frankly, it had been much easier to deal with the previous town chief, Count Lodol... Viscount Lodol.

“What am I even supposed to do here...”

“I have a good idea, Cid!” declared Michiru, an apprentice Beddhist nun who had just climbed through his window.

“Michiru. This is the second floor, it’s dangerous. Could you stop coming through the window? I’ll be fine if you just come through the front door.”

“It’s fine, ’cause I’m a good nun! But anyway... Putting that aside, we can have them work at the church! They can be our servants! I can promote them to nuns or priests if they do good enough! Or something?”

The Beddhist church was presently extremely busy due to the influx of new believers inspired by Succuma and such. The same was true for the Beddhist church in Dragg. Goren was having it especially rough, as it was being considered a kind of holy ground.

“We need manpower! Please!”

“...Hm. It is true that having them serve Her Holiness Succuma would follow their will. Perhaps they will accept their punishments being shortened. I’ll try it out; thank you, Michiru.”

“Oh no, no, not at all! The Beddhist church just simply can’t allow anyone to be so worried about something they can’t sleep!” Michiru declared, grinning and giving a thumbs-up. To Cid, she seemed like an Angel savior. “Now adieu! Oyasuminasai!”

“Again, going through the window to leave is dangerous, too...

Aaand, she's gone."

Michiru had left so briskly it was as if she could fly.

"Alright, guess I'll try it out tomorrow."

This time, he was flooded with requests to the tune of: "Okay, we'll accept our punishment being reduced, please let us go work in the Beddhist church." That helped with their staff shortage.

[Cave of Greed's] Administration's Perspective

"Gaaah! I wanted to fight for Master with my life on the line, too!" Rei wailed, slamming her mug against the table, causing no damage whatsoever to either in the process. During the fight Rei had been busy hosting guests as the High Priestess of Beddhism, and managing supply lines. Thus, she had not been able to fight herself.

Incidentally, the mug had tomato juice in it, not beer. She had more work at the Beddhist church later.

"Are you still saying that, Rei? I am satisfied. It is a maid's wish to support her Master."

Kinue had been running around working as well, but that was a dream come true to her. She had led the Silkies squadron and directed the Succubus nuns for three days, pulling off stunning administrative work. Beddhism hadn't allowed her to stay up all night each day, but she paired up with the chief nun Suilla to split the days fifty-fifty. It was a very fulfilling time for her as a maid.

"My Golem research results were on pooooint," Neruneh said proudly. The gatestones used in the battle had been none other than the results of Neruneh's research. In short, her contribution had been massive, which was very satisfying as a scientist. On the day of she had been working as a maid, and she had unspoken confidence that she contributed the most out of the three monster girls.

"By the way, Neruneh, how are things with Wataru?" Rei asked, changing the subject easily. Love gossip was ironclad no matter where you went. Rei and Kinue didn't have any partners themselves, though, so the topic inevitably went to Neruneh and Wataru.

"Weeell, I was thinking it might be time to do research on the descendants of Heroooes. I received some documents from Leonaaa," Neruneh said. In the end, she was a scientist to the core. She cared more about food than flowers, and research than love. That said, by that she surely meant that she was planning to have children with Wataru. No doubt something had progressed between them.

"You knooow, Master is a Hero too, riiight? Which should I piiick?"

"Wataru is a more pure-blooded Hero, so his results should be

better, no? I mean, Master is a Dungeon Master, and he just recently became a god. Right, Kinue?"

"Yes, I agree. Simple is best."

"Wataru it is, theen? But if I want to reproduce these resuuults, Leona is closer to Master since she's a god and Dungeon Master as weeeell... It's difficuuult."

Her way of expressing it was bizarre, but she was conscious enough of Wataru for it to tip the scales against Keima. Considering the low likelihood of Keima agreeing to participate in the research, it seemed like Neruneh and Wataru would be bound soon enough.

Also, she was saying something about wanting to see what kind of children would be made between a Hero and a Dragon, so Igny had a chance of her own.

Niku's Perspective

After having instinctively invaded her master's bed, Niku slept with him for two weeks. As a result, Niku had kind of turned into a demigod too, but that was fine since it meant she could serve her master forever. Nothing about her appearance had changed except her eye color fading a bit.

"Good grief, Niku. You made managing the shifts very hard, you know." Rokuko said.

"I'm sorry."

Master had ground his knuckles against her head, too. It was her first time getting head-punched like that, so she truly reflected on her deeds. Apparently it had not been good at all for her to transform into a Succubus and slip into the bed with him.

"What kind of god did you turn into, anyway? Keima's apparently an apprentice creator god."

In the divine realm he had apparently been assigned the role after talking to the God of Darkness and God of Light, but since Niku had just been sleeping next to him and had no memory of going to the divine realm, she had no idea what god she had turned into.

"The God of Dakimakuras, maybe? I'm not sure."

"I see, the God of Dakimakuras. That's very like you, so that must be it," Rokuko said, nodding in agreement.

"As the God of Dakimakuras, I must be better than the Divine Pillow, then."

Rokuko did not expect her to feel competitive with a pillow.

"Well, I'm curious about the God of Dakimakuras! Do you mind if I use you for a bit?"

"Go ahead. Please do use me with Master."

"Right, I should use you with Keima. You in the middle, us on

either side?"

"Oooh... That would be perfect," Niku said, her tail wagging rapidly.

"Hold it, Niku! I want in there, too!" Soto exclaimed, jumping out of Niku's {Storage} out of nowhere.

"Would you be on top of me, then? That is beyond perfect, and into a world of pure ideals."

"That would surely be too tight for you, Niku. Could you even breathe?"

"I'll be fine. I'm the God of Dakimakuras. My body must have become perfectly adjusted for being a dakimakura recently, and I am fine even when staying beneath the covers. This lack of needing to breathe will surely help me master Demon King style," Niku said, puffing out her chest.

"Oh, not bad, Niku! That's the God of Dakimakuras for you!"

"She's just pushing through with her apprentice God of Destruction endurance, but... Well, never mind," Soto mumbled, though it was so quiet that Niku and Rokuko couldn't hear.

"Well, let's hurry on to Keima's room, then. I want to try out Niku soon."

"That's the ideal. Please enjoy yourself."

"Don't forget me, mama, big sis!"

And so, the three of them went to Keima's room.

* * *

For some reason the girls all came asking to sleep in bed with me, but naturally Soto getting on top of Niku was a bit much.

"You know it's still bright out, right...?"

"It's fine, going to bed early is okay sometimes. Isn't that what Buddhism's all about?"

Well, whatever. Not like any of us were drowning in work anyway.

"At the very least, let's have Niku and Soto between us, Rokuko."

"Well, I want to use Niku, so Niku will be on my side."

"Oh, and I want to use big sis too, so I'll be between papa and her!"

"If that's what Master wants."

Sure, sure. I made the Divine Mattress and Divine Blanket blow up in size. The divine instruments sure were convenient at such times. Soto and Niku got to work making the bed.

"It sure is busy. Are we even gonna be able to sleep, Rokuko?"

"It can be just the two of us some other night, okay?" Rokuko said, then gave me a light kiss. Stealthily, so Niku and Soto couldn't see... Was I the only one who felt that was very much like something a

couple with kids would do?

“Papa, mama, the bed’s ready!”

“Well, you heard her. Let’s go, Keima.”

Rokuko took my hand and pulled me into the bed. Niku and Soto laid down so they were between us.

I’m gonna be real lazy, sleeping all day today. Oyasuminasai.



Extra Episode — Keima and Rokuko's Wedding

“We’re having a wedding, Keima! Yours and mine!” Rokuko declared, throwing the door open with a slam.

“Oh yeah, I guess we haven’t had one yet.”

Ever since Hubb and Waife’s wedding a long time ago, the Beddhist church had fulfilled various petitions for wedding ceremonies, from humble ones to exceptionally florid ones.

“Shouldn’t we wait until things calm down a bit more? I don’t have a life span anymore, so any time will do.”

“With that kind of thinking it’ll never happen no longer how much we wait! It’s best to do things as soon as you think of them,” Rokuko refuted.

There was certainly some logic to that.

“So basically, we’re doing it tomorrow! It’s fine; I can get the dress and everything through DP. It’ll take no time at all!”

“That’s obviously not gonna work. We need to send letters to the guests and whatnot.”

“Aaah, right... I’ll send mail, then. Haku first, obviously, and Aidy. Igni needs one, too. No need for Core 219 or Mikan, they’re just dungeon associates. If we feel like it, we can hold another with just the dungeons,” Rokuko said, beginning to write her mail.

“Even if they reply instantly, it’ll still take a month to get from the Demon Realm to here.”

“You can just have Soto give gates while calling it Succuma’s blessing, it’ll be fine. It’s easier to participate in things when they can just go straight home afterwards. Let’s settle on the dates now. One week from now should be fine, right?”

“Not sure we offer a wedding course like that.”

“It’s the ultra-top-tier course just for his holiness the pope himself. I just made it up.”

The course included Succuma providing gates for all participants, and on top of that a recording of Succuma would appear on the monitor to congratulate the bride and groom by name.

Speaking of which, although I’d participated in the final battle of the [Ivory Labyrinth], due to Soto’s editing, my involvement was almost completely eradicated. As a result, there were still people who were suspicious about whether I was Succuma’s true identity. This

would be a good opportunity to create an alibi. I decided to practice talking to prerecorded footage on a monitor.

“As for the ring, this one will do. And you already have that one, so we don’t need anything more,” Rokuko said, pointing at first the orichalcum ring I had given to her as a present before, then pointing at the Succubus ring on my finger—Kosaki.

“She’s my bodyguard though, y’know... Right, Kosaki?”

“(Hm? Nah, I already consider myself a wedding ring.)”

“That’s right, Keima. Besides, what else would we do for rings? Changing them now would be bad.”

And so, it was settled that our wedding would be held in a week.

Goren Town’s Perspective

“The town chief is holding a wedding,” Gozou said. While the wedding was being held inside the church, he and a crowd of Goren’s villagers were outside its doors.

“Why can’t we go into the church, Gozou? We want to celebrate him getting married, too,” one of the townsfolk said, representing everyone.

Sadly, Gozou shook his head. “The ceremony itself is no good. The archduke said anyone less than a noble won’t do, ye see.”

“So nobles are being tyrannical?! But I thought Lord Bonodore would never do anything like that!”

“Calm down, calm down. There’s a real good reason for it,” Gozou said, plopping his hand on the shoulder of the angry man to calm him down. “Do ye wanna be in the same room as the Ivory Goddess, the emperor, his daughter, the Great Demon King, the Pope of the Church of Light, and the High Priestess of Light? There’s even Salamander the Great Spirit there, y’know. The archduke himself was lookin’ mighty pale.”

Foreign visitors from all over were gathered. There was even a Hero and the Demon Realm’s princess in there. On top of that, Tsia’s archduke and the town chief of the neighboring village. Just how much stress damage would it inflict on the stomach? One didn’t even want to imagine it.

“Thanks, archduke.”

“I woulda died in there. The pope sure knows a lot of crazy people.”

“Eh, guess I’ll be fine just joining the open feast.”

The townsfolk flipped on a dime and began praising the archduke. Then, at that moment... a half-transparent window appeared in front of the closed doors.

“Wh-What the! It’s Her Holiness Succuma’s window!”

“And there’s the town chief on it! Let’s celebrate their wedding, too!”

The screen showed Keima in a white tuxedo, and Rokuko in a white dress.

* * *

We met up in front of the Virgin Road, or rather the Stack Road, and then gathered in front of Rei, the High Priestess of Beddhhism. Incidentally, the one to escort Rokuko the bride as her guardian was Haku. She was giving me a bit of a displeased look, even now, but the fact she didn’t say a word of complaint showed that she had indeed accepted me.

“Let me begin. First, I shall define love—” I ignored the speech Rei began, which was probably being broadcast outside the church, and spoke to Rokuko (whose face was covered by a veil) through telepathy.

“(I thought we were only going to have family and close friends participating.)”

“And they all are, no? Though some of them had one bring-along.”

It was true that everyone fit those conditions. Narikin was being passed off as my little brother, Maiodore being Niku’s fiancée technically made her family, but... Bit late to be noticing, but our family had certainly grown into something massive. Maybe my thank-you gift to Bonodore should be stomachache medicine. How about Cid? He was the town chief of the neighboring town, and we called him over as a friend, but... Yeah, more stomachache medicine for him.

“(She’s about to reach the vows, Keima).”

“(Oh, nice save.)”

“Keima, Rokuko. Do not forget the comfylove in your hearts. As long as you have comfylove, your beds will always welcome you with a kind embrace. May your love be blessed—oyasuminasai.”

“Oyasuminasai,” we all said in return. It was the holy chant of Beddhhism. Even those in the seats offered a prayer in tune with Rei the High Priestess, but uh... Bit late for me to be saying this, but is that really alright? We’re talking about the top of three religions here: the Ivory Church, the Demon King Church, and the Church of Light. Niku’s even the God of Light from another timeline, so that’s like, a full set of gods? I mean, we’re the ones making them do it, but still.

“Now, the prayer between couples.”

Rei moved her position from behind the altar slightly to stand directly in front of me.

“Keima do you take Rokuko to be your wife from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in times of

insomnia and times of great sleep, to love and to cherish, even if parted by death? Do you swear to be with her, to speak openly when in distress, to negotiate for her sake, and to dedicate yourself so that she might sleep peacefully and pleasantly?”

“I swear it,” I said without a moment’s hesitation. I actually had died once already, afterwards.

Rei moved to stand in front of Rokuko. “Rokuko, do you take Keima to be your husband from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in times of insomnia and times of great sleep, to love and to cherish, even if parted by death? Do you swear to be with him, to speak openly when in distress, to negotiate for his sake, and to dedicate yourself so that he might sleep peacefully and pleasantly?”

“Of course I swear it,” Rokuko replied without a moment’s hesitation either. Rei gave a saintly nod, then returned to the middle of the altar.

“In that case, exchange your rings and holy symbols.”

A nun appeared from the side with a box. *Wait, hold it. Why is Leona infiltrating our wedding as a Beddhist nun? God of Chaos, get outta here. Don’t grin, hey, screw you.*

“Go ahead?”

“...Thanks.”

Leona joining the fray had been a surprise, but her box undoubtedly had our rings and holy symbols. The holy symbols had the relief of Beddhistism carved into them, symbolizing peace and happiness. It also reflected my resolve to absolutely be lazy and sleep all the time.

Rokuko and I put our rings and holy symbols on each other.

“And now, the kiss of vows.”

We had kissed a lot since then, but... This was our first time kissing in front of people. I was incredibly tense, in no small part due to Haku watching as well. But I couldn’t back down after coming this far, and Haku coming meant she accepted it. I steeled my resolve and lifted Rokuko’s veil.

“There’s no longer any walls between us, Keima.”

“Yeah. Rokuko.”

And so, we kissed. Her soft, squishy lips covered mine.

“I hereby declare the birth of a new married couple... Oyasuminasai! Everyone, words of celebration!” Rei declared triumphantly.

“Congratulations, my sweet little Rokuko. N-Ngh...!”

“Congratulations, oyasuminasai.”

“Rokukooo! I say, you are so beautifuuul!”

Haku blessed us despite looking vexed to no end. Then there was the emperor and Emmymephy.

"Hmph. Not a bad face you have on there, boy."

"Congratulations, Rokuko. It is good to see you happy."

The Great Demon King and Aidy. Well, they were probably praising us?

"Congratulations, big brother. Oyasuminasai!"

"Oyasuminasai, congratulations."

"Ahaha, another wondrous couple. Congratulations."

"Why is Lady Leona here... Ah, congratulations. Oyasuminasai."

There was Pope Narikin and Rokufa, plus Alca the High Priestess and Toi. I had no answers for why Leona was here.

"Keima, congratulations!"

"Ye fuckin' did it, Keima!"

"Rokuko, congratulations!!! Just ask us if you ever need anything!!!"

"Be sure to throw the bouquet my way! Congrats!"

Wataru, plus the Ittetsu couple in human form. Also Igni.

"Master, Rokuko, congratulations."

"Oyasuminasai, Rokuko, Keima! I'll find the same happiness with Lady Kuro!"

"Congratulations you two... Ngh, my stomach... Oyasuminasai."

"Oyasuminasai, congratulations... Ngh, mine, too..."

Niku, Maiodore, plus Bonodore and Cid... Yeah, Their gift would be stomach medicine.

"Congratulations, you two. I suppose I should expect nothing less from the ceremony of an apprentice creator god," commented Leona the God of Chaos. Yeah, not surprised she knew.

"(Congratulations, Keima, Rokuko. Oyasuminasai.)"

"Papa, mama, congratulations!"

And finally, Succuma on the monitor, and Soto.

Everyone blessed us all at once, and from there Rokuko and I were recognized as a married couple. I... lowered Rokuko's veil back down.

"Oh, you're putting it back down?"

"...Yeah. It symbolizes my intent to protect you."

"Eheheh, I see." Rokuko grinned so widely I could see it through the veil.

"Alright. Let's go, Rokuko"

"Um, eep?!"

I picked up Rokuko with a bridal carry. And yes, I was using Golem assistance.

"Hopefully no other couples try to copy you and get hurt. Wedding dresses are super heavy, y'know?"

"Sure, but this way's cooler, right?"

"True." Rokuko hugged me tight.

"Blessed be the start of this new journey in life! Everyone, the

couple will be departing. applaud!"

Once I brought Rokuko outside the church, the townsfolk gathered outside gave their words of praise as well.

And so, we were wed.

After that was the open feast. The entire town came together and could eat as much as they wanted, but... Dragg got wrapped up, and it turned into something massive. Naturally, the emperor, the Great Demon King, and Haku participating would kind of turn the feast into something else, so we gave them souvenirs first and had them leave ahead of time. The imperial daughter (who really felt like a body double) and the Demon Realm princess stayed. And well, Neruneh took care of Wataru, while the Holy Kingdom group was catered to by Ichika.

As for ourselves, we went through what was basically a performance for weddings at this point—doing the first tasting of the wedding cake, changing the dress at the reception, tossing the bouquet, and so on—before ultimately, just like all the other grooms, I found the right time to take Rokuko back home to the inn's grand suite.

The townsfolk really hurried me on, but well. They had nothing to do with this.

"Whew, I'm beat. That was exhausting," I said, slumping into bed. Ah, the mattress was so soft. I could fall asleep just like that.

"Things just didn't wind down... I'm tired, too. It was a good idea to have a clause that the newlyweds could go to the inn at any point in the feast."

"Yeah. I always thought the newlyweds were just impatient to get all flirty with each other, but now that I've had a wedding I get that they were just dog tired."

As I was now, I felt my heart had bonded with all the couples who had thrown Beddhist wedding ceremonies in the past.

"I'm tired, but you know what?" Rokuko said. "I'm happy, too."

"Good, then," I said. Same, since I never actually expected Haku to bless us.

"Good work, Keima. But you should take your tuxedo off before it gets all wrinkly."

"Aaah, right." I took off my clothes. Being in my underwear in front of Rokuko was embarrassing, so I swiftly moved to get my jersey on, and—

"Keima, could you take my dress off first? It's the kind I can't do on my own."

"Oh, I can call someone for you."

"What are you talking about, Keima? You're my husband; take it

off yourself.”

I guess that made sense. I took off Rokuko’s dress, and...

...Immediately, she pushed me onto the bed, still in her underwear.

“Huh? Er, Rokuko.”

“Sorry, Keima. It was true that I couldn’t take it off on my own, though. Dresses are heavy.”

“Er, uh, yeah?”

“So, Keima... Do you know what happens on wedding nights?”

Rokuko asked with a grin; her eyes had a carnivorous light in them.

Suddenly, I recalled what the God of Light (Niku) had said in the divine realm.

The original Keima and the revived Rokuko are... erm, in the process of making a little brother or sister for Soto. With Rokuko generally taking the lead.

It seemed that even after becoming gods, we couldn’t win against Rokuko.

Not that I really wanted to win.

And so, whether we ended up making Soto a little brother or making her a little sister is a story for another day.

Afterword

Ngh, I tried to stop him! But the editor, I-san, he just...! He forced it...!

Volume 17 is the conclusion of the series, ending with the true end and a completely lewd illustration.

All in all I would say that I'm highly satisfied with how it turned out; I followed up on basically all of the foreshadowing I had scattered throughout. My one regret is that I may or may not have forgotten to have Core 219 show up in the end, but let's say she was tired and resting, or maybe focusing on writing her new work in her dungeon. After all, she had experienced many thrilling events, and the video editing of Soto's broadcast stimulated her creative spirit extensively.

Really, though. Thinking about it now, it's been six whole years. That's long enough for someone to enter elementary school then graduate. The children of those parents have grown up so much... The passage of time is scary. Not fast, scary. From the web novel perspective it's been seven years; babies are now entering elementary school.

I managed to continue for this long thanks to all of your support as readers, and Youta-san's illustrations. We'll be continuing with the manga adaptation. For both my sake and the sake of Nanaroku-sensei's loan, I ask for your continued support and also offers for an anime adaptation! I would also like to release a new work. Maybe one about a High Priestess or saint or what have you. Lately it seems like romance works set in isekai are fairly possible. (← Investigates the daily Narou rankings page)

As for my thoughts now that I've finished, well, I have to say that my first editor's decision to raise Rokuko's age up was absolutely correct. The change in age added all new appeal for her, and for one reason and another it all impacted how positively Keima felt about Rokuko from the start.

(Spoilers from this point out, by the way. Those who read the afterwords first, I recommend proceeding with caution. Alright! I warned you. Spoilers from here on out! You get it, right?! Okay, continuing.)

This decision also settled in my mind that the idea behind it would be a split in the world line. I went into this long adaptation with the thought of it being a loop in mind, and Rokuko calling Keima

“Master Keima” was somewhat foreshadowing for that. Though to be clear, aging her up wasn’t just a bitter choice I made to improve sales. Boobs are strong, seriously. I would have refused had I been asked to age Niku up, too, but Rokuko being a Dungeon Core gave me flexibility here, so... And thus began a battle of vastly modifying the web novel version and writing tons of new content. *If I change this, this will be impacted, so X Y Z...* The butterfly effect inevitably resulted in huge changes over time.

The fact LDM has such a high ratio of original content is all due to the first editor raising Rokuko’s age. And I’m not even kidding—that’s genuinely the case. Subsequently, the new content undoubtedly raised sales as well. That’s why I could keep this series going for so long.

Now then, as is fitting for the afterword of a final volume, let’s look over all the previous volumes!

First, Volume 2. Meetings, and a battle with Haku. It was at this early point that I decided the final volume would be a rematch with Haku. She is the ultimate enemy to Keima being lazy with Rokuko.

Volume 2 had their neighbors the [Flame Caverns], led by the dangerously strong Ittetsu and Redra combo. Ichika was also introduced in this volume. So, he beat Ittetsu in what was kind of a draw, and Keima steeled his resolve with the understanding this world was not a kind one.

Volume 3 had Keima encounter Wataru and Suzuki, fellow Japanese people who had been summoned over, though the latter of whom was original for the light novel. There’s Gozou and Roppe, too. Their names form a Japanese expression with Wataru’s: *gozouroppu ni shimiwataru*, “to feel something profoundly with one’s entire body.” Team Bacchaus, aka Team Bakas, aka the dumb trio. Suzuki was absent in the web novel, and that was likely due to Haku executing him for disrespect on their first meeting. In the light novel, she instead used him as teaching material for Keima. Suzuki had said, “She was some cheap shit. Didn’t even cost ten golds,” and indeed, that was foreshadowing—he fact that Suzuki hadn’t negotiated the price down, and had paid such a small sum. I paid close attention to the phrasing here. And then he was buried alive in walls, with me planning to use him later as well. His very existence is foreshadowing. That’s Suzuki for you. The three monster girls were also introduced.

After all that happened, Keima became the town chief in Volume 4. Things finally called down for him, and they could rest easy... Or rather, if that were the case the story would end, so naturally problems came. Indeed, the mysterious slime Rin, and the dungeon-smashing High Priestess Alca arrived. Alca’s {Treaty} is a contract with the God of Darkness and God of Light. It was introduced by a certain someone who wanted balance such that the Dungeon side

didn't have too much of an advantage. That someone was probably their boss.

In the fifth volume, several dungeons came together for a Dungeon Battle. A bunch of Dungeon Cores appeared at once, and the whole world broadened. Keima stopped counting the dates, and decided finally to live and die in this world.

In Volume 6, various things caused by the butterfly effect led to the order of events changing from the web novel, which resulted in the Buddhist church being founded and Leona arriving. Furthermore, Leona's positioning here impacted other things, and to fund her journey she sold insane potions and philosopher's stones in Tsia. That was a short story I wrote.

Anyway, Volume 7 finally led to THE character being introduced... Succuma. You already know what happens when Succuma is used to her fullest extent. Whew.

Volume 8 showed a glimpse of Ichika's past, and showed the seemingly mortal enemy of Dungeons: Dungeon Eaters. The Holy Kingdom was behind them. Incidentally, Isamu and Mimiko were Ichika's family that were being held hostage in her contract. They didn't really show up in this volume, but perhaps they will be returning to Goren like Uzou and Muzou one day.

Volume 9 was Igny's first appearance. She's a cute Dragon girl with sharp teeth. Keima ended up becoming a Dragon Tamer through this and that. Igny casually being summoned by the gacha showed that it was a system that could summon actual specific people.

Volume 10 introduced Emmymephy the imperial princess, who for some unknown reason is very popular with a specific set of people. The trip to the imperial capital showed just how popular Wataru really was. The kidnappers were sent from the Holy Kingdom, as expected. I like the illustration of a giantess stomping on Keima, which seems likely to lead to some people developing a new fetish.

Volume 11 was all about ideals. Wotagei was used for warfare. Big thanks to my friend, who wrote the song lyrics. This showed that Haku and the Great Demon King were actually on good terms, and that they had a mutual enemy, which was foreshadowing leading to this volume.

Volume 12 has the fake Goren town: Dragg. I like the part in the duel where Niku slammed her opponent back and forth. This volume also introduces artificial dungeons, the plot of the Holy Kingdom. The ruined Golems indicated there might have been something undead about it. Incidentally, the Artificial Core was made from the pieces of Core 66's Dungeon Core.

Volume 13 was a student trip into the Demon Realm. Core 50 can read minds as a powerful warrior, but Keima won through the power

of friendship. This volume also served as an introduction to the Demon Realm's unusual culture. You can't talk about human farms without having enormous porn doujin potential. Feel free to draw them!

Anyway, Volume 14 has Aidy coming to the empire instead, and introduces the power Artificial Dungeons have to brainwash Dungeon Cores. Though Aidy was mostly into it herself since she wanted to fight Rokuko.

Volume 15 was Soto's birth. Soon to be Sototemporarily the Goddess of Spacetime, she is a powerful manipulator of random number generators. Subsequently, Leona was doing a time-loop experiment in Daide. Yep, this was hinting that the world itself was looping.

After settling things with Leona, Volume 16 went right to the Holy Kingdom, where the mastermind behind everything was. They used possession effectively, and Alca the High Priestess returned. The God of Light himself showed up in the showdown with Core 10.

Incidentally, the city with the Church of Light's base is called Mastermind because the God of Light suggested to the first High Priestess that it be called such. For some reason the God of Light does not seem to like the Church of Light very much.

And finally, we arrive at this very book, Volume 17. I used what I had built up one by one, finally having Keima face his true enemy Haku, and with that he arrived at the ending. He can finally be lazy and sleep. It's in the title!

Oh, and by the way. Dungeon Cores 1 through 3 rule over gold coins, silver coins, and bronze coins respectively, and are based on full armored Golem-type Dungeon Cores made for practice with Sototemporarily the Goddess of Spacetime. They're actually the merchant gods, and markets and places where people use {Wallet} are considered their dungeon territory, leading to their growth expanding with economic activity.

Furthermore, the ivory coins Haku made are officially recognized by Father, and so can be exchanged through wallets with Haku receiving a cut. But they're used only in very limited areas, so she does not earn much from them.

Now then. It truly pains me to say this, but I'm all out of pages. Thank you for reading this final afterword, and thank you so much, seriously, for reading all the way until the end of this series. However, the manga adaptation will continue, so we will meet again in those afterwords. See you then.

Supana Onikage









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by Supana Onikage

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